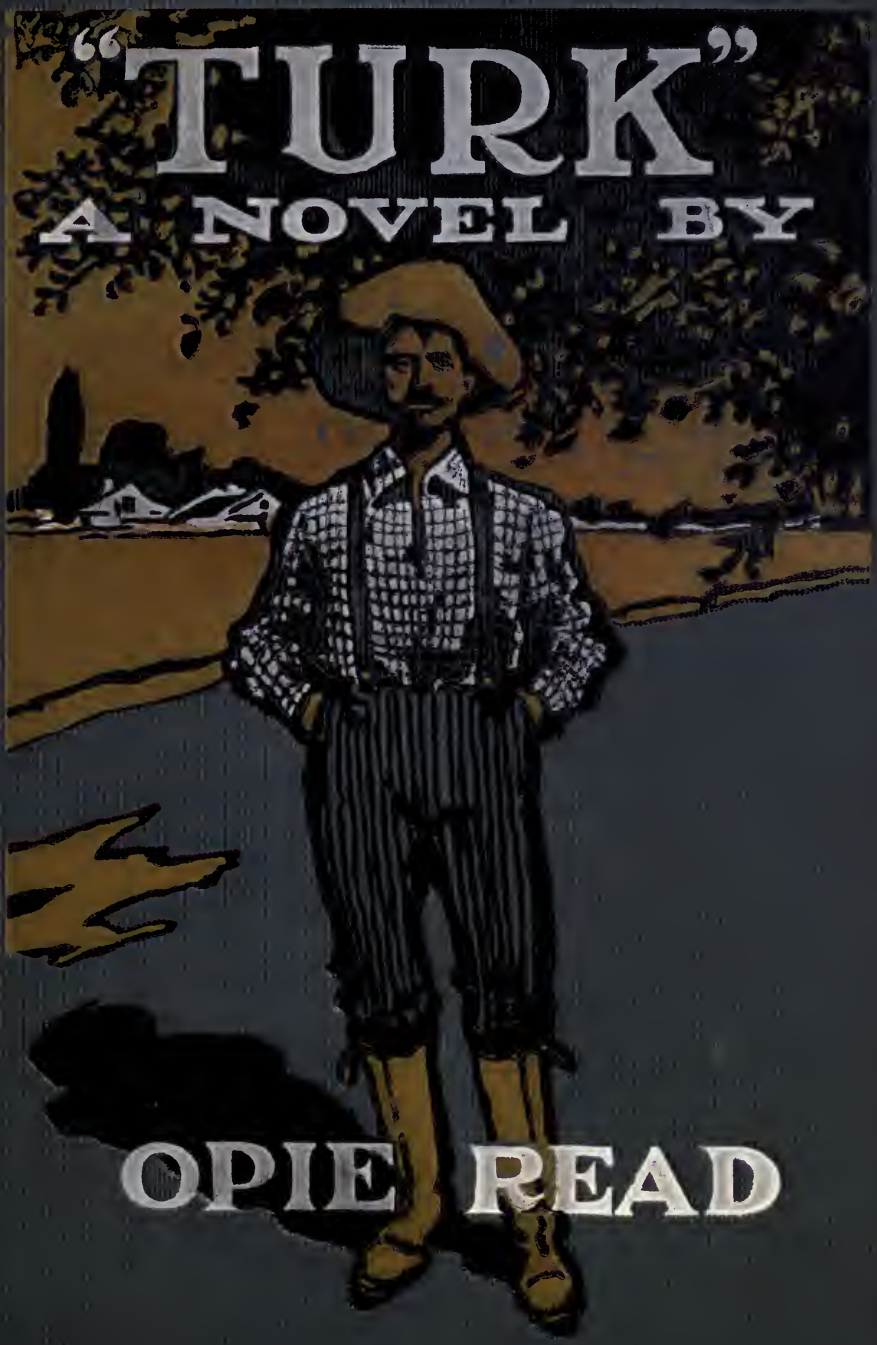
"TURK"

A NOVEL BY



OPIE READ

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"TURK"

"TO YOUR TENTS, O, ISRAEL!"

"TURK"

A NOVEL

BY

OPIE READ

Author of

The Harkriders, The Starbucks, Old Ebenezer
The Jucklins, The Carpetbagger, The Colossus
On the Suwanee River, Emmett Bonlore
A Tennessee Judge, My Young Master
A Kentucky Colonel, Len Gansett
The Wives of the Prophet
The Tear in the Cup and
Other Stories, Etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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"TURK"

CHAPTER I

TURKEY EGG

WHEN I told an old bookworm that I intended to write a history of my life, he smiled and said: "Well, you are ignorant enough to make it interesting." Since then I have found out that usually it is the learned that go off into the by-paths of speculation, whereas those not so well trained mentally move more directly toward the object aimed at in the beginning. But let not ignorance congratulate itself, for in aiming to tell its tale once ignorance not unfrequently tells it twice; old Lack-Learning wabbles in his gait and during a day's journey walks twice as far as the athlete. An old actor declared that it required almost a lifetime to learn to be natural on the stage; and if this

be true, how long must it take a man to be natural with a pen! I suppose the best way is to write as if the product were to be a letter, to be read only by one person, a friend whose nature you well understand.

I was born in a community of Kentucky wiseacres. A wiseacre, as I now recall him, was a man who observed but who did not think. In a log schoolhouse—near Blood Spring, by the way—I was taught to read; but here I did not acquire sufficient skill to master completely the pamphlet account of the tragedy that gave the spring its gory name. The little volume, with cover as red as the sumach's leaf in autumn, had been printed on some obscure hand-press, and on one page was an advertisement of a grand Whig rally to be held near the spring and to be presided over by Henry Clay. But as to the origin of the name: One day in the early thirties a school-teacher who had come from Massachusetts was detected talking abolition to the negroes. Judge Grifficost, a Justice of the peace who could hew a log smoother than any other man in the county and who, when pushed, could almost read and write, sent

word to the schoolmaster, whose name was Mulligan, that he must hush that sort of talk or the grass might forsake its native color and turn red. Mulligan sent back reply that he had framed a speech on the subject of abolition and would deliver it on the following Sunday at the spring near the schoolhouse. Hereupon the judge forwarded rejoinder that if Mulligan attempted such an outrage upon the freedom and the decency of the community, the spring would blush. A crowd assembled. The speech was attempted; and then two men stood waist deep in the water, fighting with knives. Both were killed. Before the sun went down the spring had received an enduring name. Many a time in after life have I heard a man say, "Oh, you can't scare me. I learned to read at 'Old Blood.' I'll tell you that." And it was usually sufficient to arouse sudden respect.

Yes, at Old Blood I learned to read, and would soon have been put up into the ciphering class, but was taken away and bound out to work on a farm. My education was dropped for a number of years and was taken up in prison, where I spent two profitable

years, an academy where there were many professors; but I am running ahead of my story.

I was born small, grew up runtish, and was so freckled that they called me Turkey Egg. This was shortened to Turkey, and finally to Turk. The community into which I was taken after having been torn from school was at least twenty-five miles away, and my only consolation for the breaking of old ties was that my nickname might not follow me so far. But when, upon being asked, I informed my new associates that my name was Lorenzo, after a famous divine who had challenged the devil to hand-to-hand encounter, a flame-headed scoundrel spoke up and said: "Lorenzo! Why, anybody can see your name is Turkey Egg." And they shortened it to Turkey and then to Turk.

At an earlier time a feud had left a blazed trail through a generation that bore my name—Griffin; my father, two brothers, three uncles, and, as old Squire Barton put it, a whole hell's mint of my cousins had mumbled their last words with their mouths full of dust. Tradition, which personally I could not verify,

said that one of the Nesbitts was swinging me by the heels to dash out my brains against the corner of our burning house when my Uncle Gabe "sieved" him with buckshot. Thus I became so endeared to the rough old fellow that he took my "raising" upon himself, and in time sent me to Blood, his own *alma mater*, where I remained until my patron was killed from ambush, presumably by one of the Nesbitts.

My only recollection of my mother is from a pencil sketch, made by some adventurous artist who must have been struck by her appearance. She was killed by a Nesbitt who, in the thick of the fight, mistook her for a man; and they say that her slaughterer, discovering the truth, humbly bowed to her as she lay dying and begged her pardon. Uncle Gabe killed him.

The farmer to whom I was bound had a history. As a young man he was Professor Walter Emory, in a college not far from Louisville. Here he became enamored of a young woman of the neighborhood and went almost mad when another professor won her and took her away. Being a man of devotion

to knowledge and believing in its power, Emory knew little enough of woman to swear that his rival had won by superior learning. On a veranda amid vines he had heard him talking Aristotle to her. He heard her replies, mumbled in a sort of dumb ecstasy, and he cursed himself for not having made more of a specialty of Greek. But when he learned of his loss, he kicked his Greek books out of doors, boxed the leather jaws of his Horace, stabbed his mathematics with sarcasm and betook himself to the woods. For a time he worked as a raftsman on the Kentucky River, striving to be ignorant; and later, when he had inherited a few thousand dollars, bought a farm among the hills. To physical labor he devoted himself as if it were a sort of revenge. In the society of an ignorant girl he found a moiety of contentment and would have married her, but a tobacco buyer, who could but little more than read his own name, took her away. As a consolation to this last perfidy he went into the woods and with axe and grubbing-hoe cleared up a piece of new ground. And thus it was that he hated both learning and ignorance, believing that between

the two there must be an honest medium. Several years passed and this "honest medium" was found in the person and well-concealed mental graces of a Miss Louise McWirter. They were married without any great pretense of love, and settled on the farm, there to look forward to whatever a day might choose to bring forth.

I have never discovered who it was that "leased" me to Emory. It must have been the county, to rid itself of my keep. The bond papers were never shown to me, and I did not ask to see them.

Emory did not come after me. I was brought in an ox-cart by an old fellow, who won my respect when he showed me a scar inflicted by a bear. We arrived late in the night; but I was called early to begin my labors, the setting out of tobacco plants, as there had been a rain the night before which rendered the ground suitable. The sun came out hot, and I thought that before noontime I should surely die. With me worked two other hirelings, white men; for, as I very soon discovered, Emory, being secretly an abolitionist, would not hire slaves of their

masters. Our dinner was brought out to us by two girls in red calico; one fair-haired, peeping shyly through glints of blue, the other with a kink of black hair and eyes that twinkled in a brown and, I thought, devilish dance. In my ignorance I remember to have mused that she might be the mother of a feud coming out of the far-off future. She was the younger by eighteen months and they called her Nan. Her sister's name was Amy. And in contrast how gentle she was! So soft of voice, so like a dove in first feathers, so sympathetic as she looked at me, roasting in the sun with the green gum of the tobacco plants sticking to my fingers. But Nan—she laughed, put her basket on a stump, and behind her lifted apron shook, peeping with one eye and shaking again. How I hated her! I refused to accept food out of her basket, and I believe that I should have run away had not the gentle Amy held me with a soft and sympathetic look. Nan, the little wretch, did not inquire my name. This was a disappointment, for I fancied that with "Lorenzo" uttered pompously I could quell her. Through that part of the country Lorenzo Dow had

preached; to the mourners' bench he had dragged bullies, and with his own strong hands had tied and whipped a wife-beater. But Nan did not care to ask of me my name. She discovered it for herself. She called me Turkey and nodded again behind her apron. When we had eaten, and when the girls had gone back to the house, I asked one of my companions to tell me what sort of a girl Nan was, and without hesitation he spoke up:

"Just an every-day sort of she-devil." I said nothing, knowing that he had told the truth. He worked along the row, setting plants into the steaming soil, and after a time he added: "I ain't got nothin' ag'in children as a general thing; but whenever the Lord sees fittin' to take her off, I know of one feller that won't complain. They say Emory hates the world, and I reckon she's the outcome of it. I don't mind a girl that's got mischief in her, but Nan don't stop at that. She's mean."

Upon going to the house in the evening, I saw Emory for the first time. He was grayish, wore a short beard, was hook-nosed, wrinkled of brow, and bent in the shoulders. Nan had his eyes; and in them there was

always a fire, but never the glow of gentleness. His wife was a modest, refined and most charitable woman, more cultivated than he was aware of, and patient with him; and that any one must have regarded as a great virtue. I could not have told whence it came, but there was a streak of arrogance in me. So, when Emory looked at me as I stood in his presence, I felt my resentment rising and, looking into his eyes, which almost dazzled me, I said:

"Sir, I learned to read at Blood."

Nothing could have more offended him. The professor who stole the girl he had loved was once a teacher at Blood. In college he had boasted of it, had said that a Blood Spring man was never known to quail, so in my attempt to stand high upon my pride I had fallen low. He looked about him, into the corner, to the right and to the left, hunting for a stick, and finding none, gazed at me and said: "I ought to knock you down, you impudent scoundrel."

"Walter, dear," his wife spoke up, "don't be angry with the poor child. How does he know of——"

"He knows enough to boast, and that is sufficient. He ought to be cracked on the head."

I heard Nan titter—caught a glimpse of her eye, and then I said: "Sir, when a Griffin is cracked on the head, pistols bark on the hillside like foxes."

"Why," he exclaimed, almost smiling upon me, "the little freckled-face beast has spirit in him. Come in to supper."

CHAPTER II

NICK CALLS ON NAN

THE NEXT day was Sunday. The family was preparing to go to church, a log meeting-house where a gaunt expounder of a fiery faith sent infant souls to hell. To be overlooked is sometimes a kindness. I was not asked to go; so, stealing forth with a book, I sat beneath a tree in the yard and was laboriously exercising the accomplishment acquired at Blood when Nan spied me. Quickly she ran into the house. Emory came out, clearing his rough and rasping throat.

"What are you doing there?" he shouted while yet he was some distance from me. With a bow of respect, I answered that I was reading.

"Don't give me any of your freckled nods," he stormed. I arose, and now he stood near me. "What are you doing?"

"Reading, sir," I answered, trying to look martyr to learning

"Reading! Did I hire you for that? Why did I hire you?"

"I don't know, sir, unless it happened that you couldn't hire any one else."

His wife appeared in the door. "Walter, we are ready," she called. "And let the poor little fellow go with us if he wants to."

He turned about and looked at her. "Be there in a moment," he said, and then he gave attention to me. "I didn't hire you to read, I can tell you that. Don't you know that nearly every man who reads is a villain? Don't you?"

"I haven't read enough to find that out."

"Well, I can tell it to you, and now that you have found out, you needn't read any further. Give me that book."

I handed it to him. He glanced at the title, threw the volume over into the hog-pen, and turning toward the house roared as he went: "Children of the Abbey! Who the devil brought that thing into this house?" Suddenly Amy's face, pale and in fright, appeared at the window. It was a sight so sad that I looked away, and when he began to scold her, I stopped my ears. Afraid that he might

extend to me the revengeful courtesy of an invitation to hear his sort of gospel, I leaped over the fence and slunk off down into the woods; and now I was at home, for my people all were woodsmen, serving God best when they were alone. It was said of my old Uncle Simon that once when he had come up out of the wilderness to attend communion, he seized the wine cup as it passed, threw the wine into the face of the minister and cracked him over the head, thus showing to his followers that it was not well to dispute with him upon the minor points of the Last Supper. It was a matter for shame, but secretly I admired those boisterous traits, and more, perhaps, now that I was a slave. The runt is likely to hold in his breast the venom of a whole generation; the hunchback with his wit is nearly always a satirist; but, praise the Lord, though under size, I was of fair shape and of bounding energy except when set to a work that I despised. Much is it to my discredit; but on this day, scorched with a master's indignity, I believe that, had a highwayman come along and offered me a horse and a pistol, I should have gone with him to rob the rich. One

night I had dreamed that a miser's blood was yellow, and for a time I felt that I was tempted to find one and stab him to learn if it were true.

Beneath a beech tree where the ground was soft with moss, I lay down listening to the stirring air that wooed me toward sleep. Then forth from thickets came the shy bird that sings only for himself, riotous in his seclusion, not knowing that my thievish ears drank up his music. A summer's cloud came over, seen through half-shut eyes, and down came a gentle shower, pattering on the thatch of leaves. Up arose the sweetened mingling of a hundred scents, elusive perfumes never yet by man extracted from their native bloom. The cloud passed away, followed by the misty air; the sun blazed out again, and in the creek, blue and noiseless near where I lay, I heard the splash of the eager bass, leaping to catch the fly; or was he, full of man-like vanities, striking at the passing cloud? Then all fell into delicious nothingness, into a dreamless, miniature eternity. Had it not been better, I have often wondered, to have slept on in that mossy bed? Ah, but not until

we awake do we know that sleep has been delicious.

I was aroused by Emory's harsh voice. "If you want anything to eat, come on to the house," he shouted, standing not far away. I would have requested him to let me sleep, for therein the bound boy is as free as the maker of the law, but he yelled at me: "Get up, you lazy thing, and feed the horses."

He turned away, and I scrambled to my feet, dreading Nan's dancing eye and wondering if Amy's face were still pale and frightened. But in the dining-room all seemed to be in good humor. Emory and his wife were discussing the sermon, and in his voice there was now and then a tenderness when he called her Louise. The girls were busy with frock talk and ribbon comment, and thus I was left to myself. The other hired hands had gone "galling," as they termed it, granting to me more freedom, but also more work.

How typical of the community was the meal—corn light bread, a cold boiled ham, snap-beans boiled with a piece of bacon, and buttermilk poured from a yellow, earthen pitcher.

"Did you know that while you were asleep the hogs got into the potato patch?" Emory asked, fixing his schoolmaster eye on me. Nan began to titter, but Amy looked sympathetic. Mrs. Emory sought to lead him back to the sermon, proving to me that she was my friend; but he waved his hand as if he would brush away her voice. "Did you know it?" he repeated. And by impudent courage I was moved to answer: "While I was asleep I didn't know anything."

He looked as if he would swallow me with his eyes. "And did you know anything after you awoke?" To Nan this was a bright witticism, and she laughed at me, the little beast.

"Not very much, sir."

"Ah," he said, "how ignorance is sometimes inspired with a truth! Have you any idea what I'll do with you if you don't attend to your duties better? Have you?"

In my ears there arose a sound like the singing of a tea kettle. My blood was beginning to boil. I looked at him—and I meant what I said—looked at him and replied: "You may not have to do anything with me. When the time comes I will kill myself."

"Oh, Walter, Walter," cried the gentle woman, "don't you see how you torture the poor thing? Please don't. There, Turk, don't—don't."

She thought I was crying. God knows my heart was far from weeping. The devil was in my soul, a sharp case-knife within my grasp, and I was hungry to cut my tormentor's throat; but I looked at Amy. My hand spread out upon the table. The knife seemed to flee from me. "Learned to read at Blood," he said, and was going to continue his torture when his wife spoke up: "Walter, he can be of a great deal of service to us. Let us treat him kindly."

"Treat him kindly! Isn't that what I am doing? I'm talking to him for his own good, and not mine, I assure you. Kindly! Don't we let him eat at the table with us? Is there another family about here, in this the State of Kentucky, that would seat hirelings with the family? Treat him kindly, indeed!"

I slept in an attic at the top of one of the wings of the spreading log house, in a room all to myself, and for this I was humbly thankful. The furniture consisted of a tick stuffed

with straw, a bedstead made of oak saplings, a chair with a wooden bottom and a lame back, a barrel of carpet-rags, and my own box painted red, perhaps in unconscious commemoration of the fact that I had learned to read at Blood. That evening when I went upstairs, there on my box was something to warm my heart to gratitude: a book, a simplified volume of English history; yes, and beside it lay a candle. Amy's sweet face arose before me and in my heart I blessed her. But soon I discovered that slyly must I indulge this new luxury. Emory was possessed of the habit of walking up and down in the yard until all the rest were in bed, and a light in my room, I knew, would bring his rebuking clatter upon the stairs. The moon was shining, and at a gable-end hole—my window—I watched him, sometimes counting his footsteps, gazing at him as he stood by the fence, wondering if in his nature there were ever to be found a soft side. Finally he went into the house. I heard him kick off his shoes upon the bare floor, and then I lighted my candle. On the fly-leaf of my book was written in print letters the words: "When you have finished this book

make a cross mark on the smokehouse door and I will bring you another one. Don't say a word and don't thank me, 'cause if you do you won't get any more books." Little angel! For a time I could not see the printed page, except in a fog; and then I could not read for thinking of her. But thirst to know something put an end to my musing and I bent myself to the book, a sweet and to me a revengeful task; for, pitying me, my old schoolmaster had said: "There is but one man better and stronger than another—the man that knows the most." I have lived to learn that in the opinion of the world this is not true; though to the bookish poor it may always serve as a consolation. The university president delivers a lecture upon the subject of success in life, the end of which is to acquire the bodily comforts of life. But if he believed that learning were success, instead of pointing to men who have made themselves "great" in material things, he would point to the library.

In this, the summer time, my work on the farm was desperately hard; but the knowledge that in Amy and her gentle mother there was sympathy for me gave me spirit, and spirit can

"FOR A TIME I COULD NOT SEE THE PRINTED PAGE"

stand more taxation than bodily strength. In those days we had no cultivators sweeping two rows of corn at once. Down between the rows we went with a single plow, two rounds, four furrows; and when the corn grew high enough to exclude the free circulation of the air, the field was as hot as an oven. On the morning after the gracious donation of book and candle, I was plowing in a creek-bottom field, when, turning around at the fence, some one called to me. I looked up, and out of the high corn in an adjoining field came slouching a tall, "one-gallused," pale chopped, long-necked young fellow. He came up to the fence, put his chin on the top rail, looked at me, ejected a yellow spray of tobacco through his teeth, and said:

"You are workin' for them folks up yander, I reckon." I told him yes; and he looked harder at me and spat again. "You are the feller they call Turk."

"Yes, they call me that, but my name is Lorenzo."

"Lo-Lo-Lo-whatzo?" he shouted, and to prevent his falling with laughter, he clung to the fence. "Whoop!" he cried, getting a bet-

ter grip of the fence, "here is Lorenzo." I began to feel about for a rail light enough to wield, found one, and should have cracked him on the head with it had he not changed his insulting tune.

"Hold on," he cried, "I'm Nick Bowles, your friend. I was just glad to see you, that's all. Don't you want a feller to be glad to see you? You are hired out, and so am I, and we don't want to fight. But say now, Turk, don't come tellin' me your names—hold on, I won't do it again." He stood back from the fence, grinning at me. I put down my rail, and he came forward again. "How old are you?" he inquired with so much of honesty in his voice that I told him.

"Goin' on seventeen, eh? Did you ever steal a horse? Hold on, now. You wouldn't hit a feller for a little thing like that, would you?" He looked at me as if he would charm me over and then said: "I stole a horse not a great while ago. It was on a Sunday and I was goin' on to meetin' over at Old Blood——"

"At Old Blood!" I cried, now interested. "Why, I learned to read there."

"You did? Then I bet you *would* 'a' hit me

with that rail. But let me tell you: I was goin' on to meetin', and the fellers with their gals come a ridin' by, a splashin' the mud at me, an' I says to myse'f, I says, 'Nick, ever'-body but you is a ridin'. Whar's yo' hoss?' Then I says to myse'f, I does, 'Ain't got none.' Then somethin' else says, says it, 'Why don't you git you one? They are plentiful enough.' 'That so?' says I, and then I begin to look around, and when a feller's lookin' round for somethin' to steal, it ain't never long till he finds it. Well, I come along by a stable and hearn a hoss stompin' inside, and I says, 'Nick, that stomps like a fair artickel of a hoss,' and that somethin' that was a urgin' me on says, 'Best in the land and a feller that has done without a hoss as long as you have don't want none but the best.' I opened the stable door and looked in, and the hoss he sorter wunk at me with one eye and says, says he, 'E-he-he-he,' as if his friend had come to see him. And he had, too, I tell you. And, sir, thar hung a saddle and bridle right handy, and I bridled him and saddled him and led him out, and he capered in the sunshine. I got on him and it 'peared like his feet didn't tetch the ground,

he was so anxious to travel. I had 'lowed I'd go to church, but then I thought it wouldn't look well goin' to church jest after stealin' a hoss, so I struck out across the country. I didn't have no money, but a feller with a good hoss can always live like a fightin' cock in Kaintucky; so I was all right. Wa'n't old enough to git married, but I was big shakes among the gals. But one night while I was a settin' up to a woman that would weigh about two hundred and fifty and old enough for my mother, a deputy sheriff he j'ined the company and cut me out."

"What did they do with you" I asked as I swung my plow around.

"With me? Oh, they lawed over me a while, and one old lawyer got up and made the jury cry and they turned me loose. And I reckon now I'll walk for a while. Hold on a minit. Air them gals up at yo' house big enough for a feller to go to see? If they air, I'll drap over. I'm a lady's man, me."

I told him that so far as I knew both were big enough, but that Nan was likely to be his choice. "Come over next Sunday and call for her."

"Nan. Reckon I can ricollect her name. Don't know the old man. Reckon he'd shy at it?"

"Why, it would tickle him mighty nigh to death."

"All right, I'll be there. Say," he called as I started off down a corn row, "don't say nothin' about the hoss. Some folks is mighty easy prejudiced, you know."

I was about finishing that field, went over into another, and did not during that afternoon nor indeed for several days see Mr. Bowles; but the projected picture of his appearance at the house to call on Nan, the stinging nettle, was, in the dazzling heat of the sun, a constant amusement and a lightener of my toil.

My companions "in hire" were as stupid a pair as ever cried "gee" to an ox. One was Mose and the other Tab. Their other names counted for nothing. Mose was characterized by saying, "Wall, yes," and Tab by "Wall, no." They slept in the barn, and, I believed, shaved once a week with the point of a scythe. I felt that they were not my friends. It may be true that misery loves company, but misery

to misery often proves a traitor; and I had cause to believe that Mose and Tab, seeing that I was none too well thought of by the master, sought to advance their own interests by dispraising me. Amy dropped a hint that they had reported me lazy when alone in the field. It may have been true that forgetfully I sometimes halted to muse, to build a filmy castle and with gauzy fancies to people it; but my work showed for itself. Why is it that the underling should be the underling's enemy? I spoke thus to Mose, but he pretended not to understand me. He ordered me out of his chamber, the barn, came at me with an iron-bound hame, and I would have stabbed him with a pitchfork but that his partner seized me from behind. I don't know what the outcome would have been, but just at that moment Emory came upon the scene.

"What, scuffling here for amusement when you should be at work?" he cried, mistaking our purpose. "Turk, go to the house and split wood to heat the oven. They are going to bake bread."

Our master indulged the foreign custom of baking bread in an oven out of doors, a sort

of light bread that I had never seen before; our native product being of what they called the salt-rising quality. And I was willing enough to work about the house, for then I caught glimpses of Amy's sympathy. I believe that originally it was Emory's intention, in keeping with his ancient revenge, to let his daughters grow up in ignorance of all literary graces, granting to them only common reading and blunt arithmetic; but while they had not gone to school, he permitted his wife to teach them. And she was indeed a rare governess, for slyly she added many a mind-gracing conceit not thought out by her husband—traitor to learning. That morning I had made a cross on the smokehouse door, and up to my room I stole to note the change in my circulating library. Ah, and on my box there was another book and a new candle. Amy came out to show me something about the oven, and with gratitude in my heart I began to thank her. How awkward I was! "You are," said I, "the most beautiful girl——"

"Oh, you mustn't say that," she broke in, her astonished eyes opening wide.

"But you are."

"No, I am not. You are too—too young to talk that way," she said and blushed as if she had surprised herself. "I don't mean that anybody is old enough to say such things," she corrected herself. "See, you have to reach away in and rake out the ashes."

"Yes, I see. But who would be so kind to me as you are?"

"Rake out the ashes. If father sees you standing here he might scold—*me*."

That set me to work.

Amy went into the house and pretty soon Nan came forth, giggling at me. "You don't know how to do anything," she said. "What makes you so lazy?"

"I am not lazy, Miss."

She made a mouth at me, stooped to spread her short skirt upon the ground, mocked me with a satirizing curtsy, and jumping up flew into wild antics with a laugh.

"Do you belong to us?" she asked with devilish innocence, and then with mouth open whetted her cutting tongue against her teeth. So angered was I that I couldn't speak. "'Cause if you do, I'm going to sell you," she went on; and then, turning from me, she

hummed a tune. Mrs. Emory came to the door and called her. "Nan, come on to your books. Amy is getting ahead of you again, and you'll have to study at night to catch up."

"I don't care, mother. I don't want to know anything anyway Nobody but dull people know anything."

"Come on in. You are bothering Turk."

"Oh, I'm not anything of the sort, am I, Turk? I have just been telling him how well he's fixing the oven, haven't I, Turk? Let me stay here, please. Turk wants me, don't you, Turk?"

She gave me an appealing look and a merry twinkle of her eye, and making swift motions with her little brown hands coaxed me into lying. "She is helping me," I spoke up, expecting the reward of a pleasant word; but when her mother had withdrawn into the house, the vixen said: "How easy it is for you to tell a fib, Turk! I'll never believe anything you tell me. Yonder comes father."

Emory came up while I was stooping to blow the fire. "You are as slow as winter sap," he said; and I know that Nan did not

understand his meaning, but it was directed against me, and that was meaning enough to make her laugh. And then I began to laugh—laugh so that I spluttered upon the feeble flame and put it out. I was thinking of the coming visit of Nick Bowles.

It seemed that between Saturday and Saturday was stretched a creeping age, but Sunday came again. It was ordered that I should go to church with the family, and I was afraid that Nick might be late with his call; but just as we were ready to get into the barouche he came up to the gate. I could have blessed him for not greeting me as an acquaintance, thereby making me a party to his impudence; indeed, I would willingly have gone down on my knees and tied his raw-hide shoe strings. Was it consideration or forgetfulness? No matter; it served. So, paying no attention to me, he looked about him and bawled out, "Whar's Nan?"

I did not see the others—my attention was fixed on Emory. He turned from a buckle that he was fastening and, with the red from the strain upon his face, confronted the visitor. "What did you say, sir?"

"Which gal is Nan? I'm Nick Bowles, and I've come to see her."

Emory was now desperately cool. It seemed to me that suddenly I could see the perspiration congeal upon him. "Turk," he said, "look in the wagon body and hand me that strap."

"It's not there; you've just buckled it," I replied.

"What does this impudent puppy mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Emory. I looked at Nan to see her wither; but she didn't. Of what sort of stuff was she made? She stood there smiling, while her sister was confused and as red as the sun-side of a ripening peach. "Why, father, he's my beau," cried Nan.

"Beau!" thundered the professor, a name he went by when his back was turned. "Beau! Now by the Lord I'll beau him," and with that he snatched up a hickory switch that some ox-driver had dropped in the road. Mrs. Emory ran forward with a plea for gentleness, but the professor roared to drown her voice and made a swirling cut at Nick.

"Quit that now," cried the beau, leaping back and flopping over the fence. "Don't you

want a feller to come to see yo' gal? All right, then, excuse me." He wheeled around, dodging a flint that the professor sailed at him, and ran off down into the woods.

For a time we drove along in silence, the learned man, it seemed, too angered to speak; but finally he turned about and, fixing his eye on Nan, inquired if she had ever given that lout the encouragement to call on her.

"I never saw him before, but I think he's awfully nice looking," she replied.

"Never saw him before! Then why did he come to call on you, a mere child? Who is he, anyway?"

"If I never saw him before, how do I know who he is?" she answered, and I could hear her titter as if she were in an ecstasy of fun. And then, as if before the professor arose anew the vision of Bowles, he snorted forth, "Nice looking! If I ever saw a worse scarecrow, I'll give my soul to—to——"

"Walter," his wife broke in, "he must be some poor, irresponsible thing escaped from the county farm."

"Impudence from a jail," replied the professor. "And to think that I have a daughter

that would countenance such a thing. Oh, it must be written in the book of Fate that I am to be disgraced."

"Well, none of my people ever disgraced— "

"Oh, I know all about your people, Louise; but Fate, like a lop-eared hound, never dogged your people."

In his anger the professor had about him somewhat of majesty. The stoop straightened out of his shoulders; he had not the blurred eye that looked back upon a mottled past, as seemingly was his wont, but the clear eye of forward action. He challenged my respect, for then I thought him brave; and in that part of the country and among my own people who had passed away, physical aggression was the cap sheaf of merit.

Ah, the desolation of that day at church! By the time we reached the meeting-house the professor's anger was gone, having given way to a return of his shoulder-bending creed, and, I thought, in the mind of the learned how monstrous a god can be! How learning can warp and twist a simple faith into outrageous meaning! I had heard that the preacher was the output of a great school,

greater, of course, than Old Blood; and while outside the house, before the sermon was begun, listening to some men talk of his great power, I condemned myself for having sneaked off down into the woods on the previous Sunday.

Within the house a hymn arose and broadened into the outer air. From the woods men came sauntering, the younger giving place to the older, and all, at the door, gallantly making way for the women. For me there was no seat, but near the door I had an advantageous place to stand, on a block of wood; and I waited, eager to catch the first inspired word. But from the preacher the words did not come with the ease and directness of inspiration. In his selection of what he thought to be the proper term, he hemmed and hawed; he seemed to take up a word, weigh it, feel it to determine its texture, throw it aside, and fumble again in his knowledge-bag for some other expression. He reminded me of a farmer sorting out seed potatoes. He said something about the never-dying fires of hell, and the professor groaned "Amen." It flew to my evil mind that he must be thinking of

Nick Bowles, and I clapped my handkerchief to my mouth, but snorted through a hole, and a man sitting near turned to me and said, "If you can't behave yourself in the house of God, go out into the woods of the devil." I felt that I could not behave myself, and I went out, though not into the woods of the devil, but into God's woods whence came the gospel. There I walked about, watching a bee that labored on the Lord's day, culling sweets from flowers that the Lord provided. The preacher warmed up to his work, and now his shouted words rang against the timbered hillside. His inspiration had come unto him, and, no longer sorting seed potatoes, he was sowing grain. But I was afraid to go back into the house. I sat down beneath a tree and with droning noises in my ears would have dropped off to sleep, had not a voice aroused me. "Well, how are you by now?"

I looked up, and there stood Nick Bowles. He gave me a grin, sat down, pulled at the grass, stuffed some of it into his mouth, chewed it with a sideward motion of jaw, and then, blowing it out, shook his head wisely and said, "That's the way a hoss chaws."

Trying to be serious, I asked him if he had been in the house, and he shook his head. "Too slow in thar for me. Swop knives with you? No? Then less rassle. Bet you I can fling you best two out of three. Don't want to rassle? What do you want to do? Less go down by the creek and grabble for fish. I know whar's a yallerjacket's nest. Less unhitch some feller's hoss and drive him over it. Me and Bald Saunders done that onct, and the hoss he run right into the meetin'-house and the folks thought the devil had come sure enough. Never had mo' fun in my life—crippled one feller. What do you say?"

I demurred to all of his offerings and then he stretched himself out, put his straw hat over his face, and said that he would take a nap; but a memory of the morning came floating along, and he got up. "I reckon that old feller don't want his gals to git married. He come mighty nigh shavin' me with that flat rock. That little one was Nan, wa'n't she? I thought so. She's putty enough to take a feller's appetite away from his vidults. Pops them eyes of her'n like a whup. About when is the best time for me to come ag'in?"

I told him that about noon sometime; and then, seeing in my mind a dish sailing at his head, I was seized with such laughter as was almost enough to split me. He said that he didn't see anything to laugh at. In his community girls set out early. "And I reckon I'm from as good folks as he is. My daddy killed the last bear that was seed on Lickin River. This feller needn't come a high-headin' it over me." He arose and stood looking off toward the church, and suddenly his eye seemed to be illumined as if with a yellow flame. "Yander's about as putty a dog as I ever seed. Wonder who he belongs to? Wuth five dollars if I could git him down to Scoville—auction him off thar on the public squar. He's gone around the house now. Say, these folks don't hold revivals and shout. They ain't warm enough. But you have to git religion before you can join 'em. Ever git religion? I got mourners' bench religion once. And I reckon I would'er kept it till yit if I hadn't seed a suckin' pig that sorter tempted me. Sold him for fifty cents, and a preacher eat the most of him."

"How did you feel when you thought you'd

got religion?" I inquired, speculating upon that mysterious spirit that I fancied to go about from one camp-meeting to another, knocking for admittance at the door of the soul.

"Oh, sorter warm under the collar, and then felt like a kittin without claws was a pawin' me in the bosom. Didn't hate nobody on the face of the yeth. Would'er give back a chicken or anythin' that I had stold. 'Peared like the Lord thought as much of me as he did of anybody, but I soon found out the fack that this part of it wa'n't true. The Lord jest nachully don't care nothin' fur me. Somehow I set out wrong and didn't please him from the start."

This would have given to the wise man now thundering his eloquence in the house an opportunity to show his pretended love for the wayward and the humble. He could have told Nick that in the merciful scheme of redemption he was as precious as any man enthroned, with head circled about with a nation's gold; and I might have done the same, but lacking words or even the knowledge of the Savior's democracy, I sat with dumb ignorance sealing my lips. "It's a fack,"

Nick went on. "Every other feller that I ever knowd had some sort of a chance, but the Lord never give me none. Tuck my mammy away from me when I wa'n't nothin' but a child and left me a daddy that was drunk nearly all the time."

'What became of your daddy?" I asked, softening toward the poor wretch.

"Who? My daddy? Well, in the stillhouse they got into a scrape and a feller killed him."

"Why didn't you kill the feller?"

"Who? Me? I wa'n't big enough."

"Is he livin' now?"

"Lemme tell you somethin'. The feller wa'n't much better than a boy at the time, and atter he was tried and turned loose, he tuck on so that the folks raised money and sent him off to school. Whar is he now? He's in that house yander, preachin'. Lissun, don't you hear him?"

His last words brought me to my feet. Was it possible that the slayer of this poor devil's father was so honored of man and of the Lord? Ah, and why not? Paul was not a slayer of drunkards, but he was a persecutor of the saints; and perhaps in the thicket of

this man's darkened soul a bush had caught fire, and unto him a voice may have cried, and he may have seen an illumined road leading out of the jungle.

"Ought I to kill him now?" this yellowish boy inquired.

"You mustn't ask me. I belong to a different breed from you. But the man that killed my daddy couldn't preach. I'd set his church on fire and shoot him as he run out."

He looked at me and grinned. "I reckon you are a good deal of a young devil, ain't you? That's what I've hearn. And I've hearn, too, that the man that's got you said he'd worry the most of it outen you. Hello, meetin' is busted."

As my skill in driving was not to the notion of the professor, I sat back in the barouche on the way home. While the text and the sermon were under discussion, I sneaked the opportunity for a few words with Amy. I asked her if the preacher were a good man, and she looked surprised. "Why, of course," she said. "What made you ask such a question as that?"

"Because he killed a man."

"But haven't your people killed men?"

"Yes, but they didn't go about and preach."

"But wouldn't they have been better men if they had?"

She was too much for me, and in deference to her I bowed my head. The professor looked back at me. "Talking about Mr. Hoover, are you?"

"Talkin' about the preacher—don't know his name," I replied.

"Well, not knowing anything about him, you have no right to discuss him."

"I might know somethin' about him without knowin' his name," I ventured to remark; and for a time the professor said nothing, looking forward and giving his attention to a rough place in the road. But when he had kept the wheel safely out of a deep rut, he looked back at me. "You heard of his killing a worthless fellow named Bowles, I suppose. He was hardly worth killing, but of course that was neither here nor there, so far as the deed was concerned. Previous to that time Hoover was wild and worse than reckless. He neither feared God nor respected man; but that tragedy reformed him, and since then he has

done a vast amount of good. And I feel that surely his soul is elected to salvation, but of course you don't know anything about that."

I was bold enough to reply to him, "Reckon he'll be saved because he had a chance to live and be sorry for what he had done. But how about the man that was killed? He didn't have any chance. Was he elected to salvation?"

He pulled his horses to skirt a mud puddle and again gave attention to me. "Turk, you are impudent. You haven't the intelligence to understand, and when your little knowledge gives out, you supply its place with impertinence."

"I don't think so," Mrs. Emory spoke up. "His question is but natural, especially as it has, no doubt, often been asked before; but I am like Turk, for I should like to know what has become of the soul of the man that had no chance to repent."

The professor puffed up like a pouter pigeon. "If I believed in the transmigration of the soul," said he, "I should settle it that the soul of that wretch Bowles is now in a hog, one day to return to the pretense of man-

like shape and enter the body of a negro trader."

"Walter," she cautioned him, "be careful how you talk. Remember one of the aptest of all quotations, 'Your words draw ears.'"

He whipped at a lagging horse and for a time was silent; then he asked who had told me of the preacher's "unfortunate affair with Bowles."

"His son," I answered.

"Bowles' son? I didn't know he left a son. Where does he live?"

"Off somewhere over the creek—works in a field that joins us."

"Why, I don't know but that I should like to see him."

"You have seen him."

"Have seen him? When?"

"To-day, when he came over to call on Nan."

Nan shrieked with laughter and clapped her hands. The professor cleared his throat. "I don't like the traps you set for me, sir."

"Walter," Mrs. Emory spoke up, "he didn't set a trap for you. You set it for yourself."

"Louise," said the learned man, "you may be

unconscious of the fact; but you are stimulating rebellion in that boy. Turk, do you know what rebellion is?"

Before I could answer, Nan giggled out, "He knows what laziness is."

"I wasn't speaking to you, dragon-fly," said the professor, reaching back and, with the tip end of his whip, touching her dark curls. "What is rebellion, Turk?"

"It's refusin' to do somethin' that somebody wants you to do that oughtn't to be done."

He popped his whip. "Satan was without a doubt one of the teachers at Old Blood." And when we had gone a short distance further he added: "While they are getting dinner ready, you go round the field to see that there are no hogs in the corn."

CHAPTER III

THE REVENGE OF MOSE AND TAB

WHILE walking along a cattle path crooking its way through weeds that grew rank in the bottom, some one called to me. I halted in a cleared place, and out of the green jungle came our hired men, Mose and Tab, both drunk. They said something about having caught me at last, and then stood leering at me. I asked them what they wanted, and they replied that I was the prize they were after; and with that Mose seized me, while Tab tripped me to the ground. I bit and scratched, but it was of no use. "The little devil's like a wild boar-pig—won't squeal nohow," said Mose, bearing upon my back with his knees, tying my hands behind me with his suspenders. "Oh, you'd make at me with a pitchfork, would you?"

"With a shotgun when I get loose," I answered, now lying still, knowing that it was of no avail to struggle.

"When you git loose," roared Tab. "All right, when you git loose."

"What are you goin' to do with me?"

"Put you across a log," the brute replied, tying my feet.

They carried me out into the woods, found a log, and threw me across it. I heard them cutting switches. And then without more ceremony, they began to lash me. Let some man that has stood at the whipping-post tell of the agony I must have suffered; but the log being small and my mouth biting at the grass, I made no outcry. Within my breast was a fury hotter than the sun which, pouring down between two trees, baked the blood on my back. A black hand seemed to grip at my throat, and then I knew nothing.

When I came to, I was lying on my back, untied. The sun was far over in the west. Above me, on the dead prong of a lightning-blasted tree, a rain crow was calling, and near by a cow was ringing her bell. It was as much as I could do to get up, and I staggered when I arose. Twice I stumbled and fell before reaching the road. Out in the road I fainted into the darkest oblivion, and when

the light came back I was in bed, not in the professor's house—but in a cabin with rough and unhewed walls. An old man came to the bed and looked at me. "What's your name, little feller?" he inquired. I told him that they called me Turk, but that my name was Lorenzo Griffin. I looked hard at him to see if he smiled, but he did not. On his old, shaven face there was the divine light of pity. "I knew your father and nearly all your people," he said. I asked him if any of my people had ever killed any of his, and he smiled.

"No," he said, "we were good friends. Your father was the only man I ever swopped horses with that didn't cheat me. Turn over here and let me get at you a little better. I bathed your back and got your shirt off the best I could. Somebody has given you the cross gridiron, I tell you. Who was it?"

I told him as he was bathing my wounds, and he spoke words of pity. "But you must return good for evil," he said with a low chuckle; and when I told him that I hoped to live long enough to see those devils hanged, he replied that the hanging of such scoundrels was always a good.

The candle on a table at the head of my bed began to splutter, and with his fingers he snuffed it, but in doing so plucked too deep and put out the light, but in a big fireplace, where a kettle bubbled, there was a bed of coals, and here, stooping and blowing till his face was red, he lighted the candle and brought it back. He propped me up as best he could, and bringing on a tin platter some sort of stew from a pot, commanded me to eat. I did, and with a relish, for the stew was most savory.

"Soft-shell turtle," he said. "Caught 'em down on the sand-bar. The creek empties into the river not far from here, and there's a big stretch of sand—finest place you ever saw for turtles. And it will be quite an easy place to bury those fellers when you catch 'em—high water will come along and take 'em away, and then you'd be through with 'em forever. Good straight-out limbs along the bank to hang 'em on, too."

"What is your name?" I inquired, "and why do you live here all by yourself?"

"Why, I don't live by myself. I've got an old dog, if a wild hog hasn't killed him; and,

as for my name, why, I'm Champ Jones. Ever hear of me?"

"I don't recollect."

"Of course not. You were too young. Ha, it was a long time ago; not as long as my disgrace has made it seem, but a long time for all that. Once in our community we had a strange sort of commonwealth's attorney. He prevailed over a jury and sent me to the penitentiary for letting a man strike me with a cowhide."

"For letting a man hit you!" I cried out, for the moment forgetting my wounds.

"Yes. At an election one day a man struck me with a rawhide. Well, I killed him, and this prosecutor so warped the jury that I was sent to the penitentiary. Everybody said it was an outrage; but when I came out with the lime smell of the prison on me, men shied off, it seemed to me. It takes a long time to get off that smell. When we have measles after being pretty well grown, if we take a slight cold we can taste the disease for years afterward; and the penitentiary leaves a smell. Do you smell it?"

I ought to have told him that in the kindli-

ness of his nature I scented a sweet flower, but did not know how to tell him. "Ah, you do smell the prison," he said, before I could make any sort of a reply. I protested that I did not, and was so earnest that he must have been pleased, for he brought me more of his turtle stew and urged me to eat it. Now, in this after-day, I can see him as he stood there in the light of the candle, looking down upon me, and I wonder at the enlightened and the barbarous state of our society. On the one hand orators whose words rumbled and echoed throughout the country—Clays and Breckenridges, the eagles of statesmanship soaring high; on the other hand fierce brutality and bloody violence. But with it all, the high and the low, there was an eloquence in daily life among the high, the pure, the noble; and with the low was a bold assertion in whose energy there was a sort of barbaric music. The schoolhouse was not indeed, as now, the nursery of mathematics and the sciences; but was a place of declamation. Champ Jones had been a political orator.

"So," said the old man, taking the tin platter and putting it on the candlestand, "I live

out here where very few people can see me. I have a field sheltered by the woods all around. I raise enough to eat; and first and last I do a good deal of trapping along the river, sell skins and buy what few things I need."

"I would like to come and trap with you, till I get enough money to buy a gun," I said; and the old fellow's eyes twinkled.

"Oh, you're thinking about the wretches that whipped you, eh? Just as well take your mind off them; they are gone, and maybe you'll never see 'em again."

In substance I told him I hoped that God would not so desert me, and he laughed and reaching over put the hair back out of my eyes. "Ah, it would be a great man that could forget a whipping, greater than we have among us, my son."

"A coward with no recollection," I replied. Tenderly touching my breast, he said that I had spoken beyond my years. "It strikes me, Lorenzo, that you are a pretty bright boy; but the Griffins were all as sharp as steel traps and as ready to snap."

"Tell me how you found me," I asked of him.

"Oh, asleep beside the road. I was in a carryall, driving along, thinking about the peculiar stench of the cell, when I saw you lying there asleep; and when I drew up and took a good look at you, I thought your dreams must be red, for you were covered with blood. I thought then it was a case of murder, as in fact it was almost; but I touched you, and you groaned, and I put you in the wagon and brought you here. I know how to treat gashes, for I saw them inflicted in prison, and in the hospital I watched the doctors take care of them. So, you work for Emory?"

"Yes, but I'd rather live with you and catch minks."

"But I heard he had you bound to him. In this instance, my son, better not break the strings of the law. But whenever you want to see me, you shall be welcome; for, as I say, your father was the only man that could have cheated me in a horse trade and didn't. It's getting along toward ten o'clock, and now you go to sleep and early in the morning I'll go over and tell Emory."

I could not argue him out of his notion. His chin was too square and his nose too

prominent; so I dropped off into a sleep almost as profound as death itself, and when I awoke the sun was shining and the professor was entering at the door. I nodded, but he made no sign at all. His eyes were kindly, though, and he sat on the edge of the bed and felt my pulse. Old Champ came in and stood looking on.

"Mr. Jones, I am much obliged to you," said the professor, taking his fingers off my wrist. "The poor fellow might have died."

"Would you have cared, sir?" I asked; and old Champ chuckled, but the professor did not even smile. "Turk," said he, "you should not have put that question. I am a Christian, sir."

And then Champ said something that tickled me. "Elected or a continuous candidate?"

"Elected, sir," said the professor, bowing to him. "We have God's word and should know when we are saved."

"Yes," drawled old Champ, "but I don't think it's time to holler till all the returns are in."

"Sir," said the professor, getting up and

straightening himself, "I see that you are one who believes in falling from grace."

"Peter did," Champ replied.

"Sir," declared the professor, rising on his tiptoes, "I am here to refute that assertion. Peter did not fall."

"Didn't? Well, he staggered mightily."

"Mr. Jones, I am astonished at your want of information. Let me elucidate." And then followed more than an hour of controversy, such in its zeal and newly awakened vehemence as might have characterized the early days when men were making ready to sail westward for the sake of conscience. I was hungry; I wanted more of that soft-shell turtle rather than the hard shell of doctrine; but they kept on, defending point after point. Forgetful of me, sometimes one man would stand with a foot on the bed, pounding his knee, and sometimes they would walk so heavily up and down the room as to jar the house. Finally I whined out something, and the professor replied, "We'll attend to your case presently, sir."

From the window the sun removed his bar of light, but the combatants had caught new

breath. I wondered that old Champ could be so inconsiderate; but in those days to attack a man's religion was to blow an icy breath on his soul, and he must needs warm up in defense. More than a dozen times were they on the point of calling each other liars, but suddenly Champ broke off and spoke of something to eat, and instantly the troubled waters fell smooth.

"Why, yes," said the professor, "I wouldn't mind. Turk, do you think you could eat something?"

I told him that I could eat the horn of a bull, and rebuking me he added: "I hope you'll not forget to profit by what you have heard this day. You are now old enough to pay attention to such matters. I have brought the buggy for you, and—and—" He looked about to see if Champ were listening, but the old man was busy at the fire—"and as we drive along I shall recount the gist of my argument."

We had more of the turtle stew, and then I got out of bed, faint and weak, but able to walk with help. I must have come near bleeding to death, and some of my wounds

bled anew when I attempted to walk; but they were given another treatment with some sort of wash and dabbed with cotton lint, and then I was put into the buggy. Hoping to draw the professor from all memory of the gist of his argument, I began to talk as I had never found freedom to talk before. In detail I gave him an account of the whipping and, as well as I could, told of my agony; but we had not gone far when he broke in with his "gist." It was a long drive, and at the end of it stood Nan with her dark eyes mocking me.

CHAPTER IV

THE SMELL OF DAMP LIME

IT WAS not many days before I was able to work again, but as long as I could I let my scars prolong my vacation from labor. Kindness was so novel to me that I enjoyed it as a maid would a romance. Not to build a fire in the oven, not to follow a plow through the rank and stifling corn, but to sit in the shade, listening to the humming birds amid the trumpet-vines clinging about the door, was a luxury, soured only by the thought that soon it must be given over for scoldings and for toil.

The professor had reproached me for my ignorance; and yet he looked with no favor upon a book if I held one in my hand. How many people there were who, advocates of the abolition of slavery, believed in a peasantry, though it was more of a disgrace and not unfrequently as much of a hardship to be a "white-trash" as a black slave! Strange

atmosphere was that in which we lived; so strange, indeed, that the Harvard student of to-day may not without much study comprehend it.

About this time there fell, like a brilliant bloom, the seventeenth birthday of Amy. The mother pleaded that she must be sent off to school, to be finished; but for what backwoods purpose it was not easy to determine. The family was proud, and in those days there were but three vocations open for woman: marriage, which was merely natural; painting, which meant avowed admiration and secret sneers; and writing, which meant publication in the weekly newspaper if not crowded out by the flaming political screed proving that the candidate from the adjoining county was a liar and not above the unpardonable sin of horse stealing. In our neighborhood there were no "available" young men. There were hard-working young fellows, with sharp eyes for the good points of a nag and gentlemanly quick of trigger; but to educate Amy for one of them was out of all question. While the discussion was warm in the house, Nan came out with her low rocking-chair and her tat-

ting, and sat down near me. "How much longer are you going to sit about the house and listen to every word that's said?" she asked without looking at me, but busy with her thread. I can see her now as she then sat there, in a blue gingham frock, checked apron, white stockings, and "store" slippers, a white spool in her lap. And it seemed to me that a light, following her shifting eye, fell luminous upon her work. I told her that it should not concern her. Then she looked at me, devilish beauty that she was, and muffed up like an angry kitten.

"It does concern me," she said, unmuffing as it were. "I don't want you sitting about here listening all the time."

"I haven't listened to anything you said."

"No," she snapped. "I'm afraid to say anything when you are around. You'd go away and tell it."

"Yes, to your sweetheart, Nick Bowles," I replied with a forced laugh that must have sounded like the distressed croak of a toad, trod upon.

She made a mouth at me. "You are the ugliest brat I ever saw in my life," she said,

and leaning back she laughed till the pink of a sunset gathered in her cheeks, but for its very beauty I despised it. The little cat was so pretty that each expression which, like gleaming water, rippled over her face, was a pain to me. Cowed beneath her scorn, I whined that I was not as ugly as Nick. And then she laughed again. "Oh, you're a hundred times uglier. And you let folks whip you. Nick wouldn't do that. He would kill 'em."

'There were two against one, both men," I cried. "But never mind, I will bring you their scalps."

"You couldn't bring me the feather of a yellow-hammer."

"I will bring you four ears and bloody your tattin' with 'em."

Some one called Nan, and she got up, mocking me, and went into the house. Presently Amy came out and soothed me with a look. "Oh, Turk, the best thing has happened," she said. I asked her what it was. "Why, it is settled that I may go away over to Walnut Hill Seminary—and board there. Think of that."

"The best thing! I think it's the worst," I replied from the depths of selfishness.

"Now, Turk, don't talk that way. You wouldn't want to see me grow up in ignorance, would you?"

"You are about grown now and you ain't ignorant. You ain't goin' to be tall; and if a woman ain't tall it don't make so much difference if she don't know much."

"Oh, what an idea! Father hates the name of a college, and if they called this a college he wouldn't let me go there; but it is a college, though. They are going to make me some nice dresses, as soon as they sell the wheat; and off there, away from this old log house, I shall be somebody, and when I come back——"

"You won't speak to me," I broke in, feeling that I was to lose a friend.

'Oh, yes, I will; for by that time you'll know something, too; mother says nothing can keep you from getting an education—I heard her tell father you were naturally set that way."

"But how am I to get the books? When you are gone, who will care?"

'Father has a whole lot of books locked up,

and the key is on the mantelpiece under the clock. But school doesn't open until fall, and a good many things can happen between now and then. Here comes father."

Hoping thereby to win a few more days of rest, I asked the professor to give me again the gist of his argument with old Champ; and so pleased was he that I was awaking to the interest of my soul that he patted me on the head, and for more than an hour granted me the honor of his company.

Mose and Tab had robbed the house of a few trifling articles before we returned from church, and not since then had they been seen in the neighborhood. But hoping that they were somewhere to be found, I armed myself with an old pepper-box pistol that I found in a closet and set out to look for them, praying that the Lord would grant to me the delight of riddling them with slugs. The "gist" had assured me of at least three days more of idleness.

On one of my excursions I chanced to come upon the deep-wooded domain of old Champ. A wind was blowing and the boughs of great oaks swept the roof of his house. He was sit-

ting in the door, scraping a powder horn, as I turned a corner of the cabin, and shuffling to his feet he gave to me a welcoming hello.

"Come right in, Turk; glad to see you as if I'd lost a horse. Sit down over there on that candle-box. Haven't got any turtle, but I'll tell you what's roasting there in the fire, plastered with mud and covered with coals—a young wild turkey. Didn't get off his roost quite early enough this morning and I shot him. What's that thing you've got a-bulging out there?" I showed him my pepper-box, and he laughed. "Why, you might shut yourself inside of a house and you couldn't hit the wall with that thing. The only way to kill a man with it would be to ram it down his throat and let him die of indigestion. Well, sir, I'm pretty happy to-day. I think the lime scent is blown away—haven't sniffed it since day before yesterday. And I'm beginning to feel a good deal like a gentleman. But with the lime smell on him a sensitive man can do nothing. It bows him over, it steals in at his nostrils and it wakes him out of a sound sleep. I've had it choke me out of a pleasant dream. What a memory an old nose has! It remem-

bers a scent long after the ear has forgotten a tune. It brings back a scene when the eye has grown blind with age. Sometimes there comes to me the faint smell of a geranium leaf; and then I hear a voice, *feel* music and see a beautiful girl and a ball-room—but the lime smell always kills it. If it hadn't been for the lime smell, I should have married that girl—should have been in Congress these many years, my son. I am telling you so you may avoid it. Throw your old pepper-box away. Look out for the lime smell."

"I would rather have the lime smell stick to me all my life than to know them hounds are alive," I replied.

The old man shook his head, took up a stick and raking away the coals, began to tap upon a lump of baked clay. "That turkey must be about done. Ah, you may think you would, sonny, but you wouldn't. A man can learn to stand hardship, but not shame. In the penitentiary, I didn't mind the work. It was a relief, for it claimed a part of my mind; but when I went back into the cell—God!"

"The law wouldn't do anything with me for killing those devils."

"You never can tell, sonny. That's what I thought. There may be in the neighborhood the most no-account fellow you ever saw in your life. Nobody cares for him; everybody wants him out of the way; but get into a row and kill him and as like as not here comes some man that's kin to him, hires a strong young lawyer that is keen for a reputation, and away you go. Keep on the safe side; keep your nostrils free for the perfumes of the field. Now I'll set the table."

From against the wall he drew forth a large box, spread it with the libelous editorials of the county paper, put on tin plates, tin cups, knives and forks, and then raked his turkey-lump out of the fire and cracked it. The odor arising was to a keen appetite sweeter than the old fellow's perfumes of the field. When we had picked the bones, he threw them to a gaunt dog that stood drooling at the door, and after dozing for a few moments in his chair, muttering of odors in his sleep, he awoke with his old eyes bright. "Just that sort of a nap does me more good, sonny, than to lie down and snooze for two hours. A long sleep in the middle of the day sets the muscles, like an

old fox that rests too long after being chased; but a wink or two seems to temper the sinews like a piece of steel heated to a cherry red and dipped lightly into clear rain water. By the way, how does our elected brother feel since I gave him the truth the other day? Did he acknowledge that I touched him under the shirt?"

I didn't want any more "gist." I wanted, rather, to hear the old man tell of his sojourn in the penitentiary; it had a sort of charm for me. So, afraid that all the pros and cons might be presented anew for my judgment, I told him that the professor had been much impressed; and in fact this was true, though a falsehood the way I told it. And about this time, I don't know but at this very moment, came to me a sad truth, that no matter how humble the position in life, truth is often a Coriolanus with which one may banish himself. At this time, there in the old man's cabin, I did not know enough to employ simile and to speculate. I simply felt the unfortunate truth and acted upon it; but I did not accept it without protest. I thought that the fault lay with me rather than the world, and

felt an inward soreness, a fresh bruise, to think that, more or less of a rascal, I could never be honest.

"The idea that a man can be beyond the reach of sin!" said Champ, sitting with his legs apart, his hands between them, slowly turning his thumb. "My son, have you ever heard the professor say anything on the subject of slavery?"

"If I had, I wouldn't tell you," with bluntness I replied, and was afraid that I had offended him; but he smiled at me.

"That's right; don't get him into trouble. And I reckon now I can trust you. A man that thinks must talk to somebody, a child if no one else. All thinking and no talk is stagnation to the soul. I have heard it hinted that the professor is an abolitionist, and if there should get out any direct proof of it, there'll be trouble enough lurking around the corners of his house. Did you ever see a paper called the *New York Tribune*? I don't suppose you ever did. Well, I've got that old battered chest back there full of 'em. A friend in Illinois sends them five or six at a time. It wouldn't do to have it sent directly

to me from the publisher. Men who never owned a slave and who never can, would howl around me like wolves and string me up for less than a copper cent. The South has got her slavery and her religion mixed."

"The South got the slaves from the Yankees," I replied, retailing the fag end of an argument potent in those days.

"Oh, I see where you stand."

"I don't want a nigger running over me."

He gave me a pitying look. "Error caught you early, my son. And I suppose that in your mind that assertion—I won't call it a thought—that assertion overrides all principle. The founder of my religion—I'm a Methodist—in Georgia, away back in 1737, raised his voice against slavery, and pointed out the fact that eventually it would prove the greatest evil that ever fell on any country."

"It's a wonder they hadn't killed him," I said.

'Ah, but at that time he was under a law not swayed by politicians. Ah, Lord," he continued, "trouble is stewing, and there's even

many an old man living to-day that may see the rills of the South red with blood. But what did the professor say?"

"About slavery? I told you I wouldn't tell."

"Oh, no, about my argument."

"I don't recollect, but—but——"

"But you know he was stirred. All right." Getting up, he took a newspaper from the mantelpiece and unfolded it. "I see here by Prentice's *Louisville Journal* that Cassius Clay has had another fight—cut a man's collar-bone in two with a bowie-knife. I heard him speak once at Mt. Sterling. He's opposed to slavery, you know, and there had been a threat that he would be taken from the rostrum and scourged through the streets. But, bless you, he put two derringers and a bowie on the stand in front of him and said, 'We shall now in a dispassionate manner proceed to examine a question that has been forced uppermost in the public mind.' There were hisses and groans, but not as many groans, I warrant you, as would have been heard if his enemies had tried to pull him down. My son, what are you going to make of yourself?"

"A lawyer," I answered.

"A lawyer, and carrying that thing there to pepper the law?"

Taking out my pistol, and holding it on my knee, I replied: "I've got it loaded with sugared slugs, and will sweeten the law."

"Ah, you are apt; you can dodge a point well enough to make a lawyer. But remember—my God, that smell has come again! Don't you smell it, the damp lime? Go on away, Turk, I'll be no companion for you now." He led me to the door, and looking back from the woods, I saw him popping his head, like an old dog, sneezing.

CHAPTER V

HEARD THEM TALK

T WAS the next day, I think, when the Rev. Mr. Hoover, our minister, called, to scan the plan of salvation and—to eat gooseberry preserves. Still free of the field, I wore a white shirt and was permitted to sit at the table with him. Toward the ministry in general I was doubtless hardly fair. Preachers must have angered me with their white hands and their starch. In my mind there was a vivid picture, caught early in life, of a lowly man, blazing forth in godly wrath, scourging the money changers from the temple. Mr. Hoover looked like a changer of money, but, mind you, I acknowledge that I may have done him wrong.

At the table he asked me if I attended Sunday school, and my master answered for me: "He hasn't been able of late. Two scoundrels that I had working for me caught him, tied him and whipped him until he was almost

dead; but to-morrow I think he will be able to resume his duties."

I caught Nan's sharp glance, felt it pierce me like a needle; and then I looked at the preacher. Was he smiling at me? "Were you a martyr to opinion?" he asked, and then passed his plate to receive the wishbone of a "dominecker" rooster.

Again the professor was kind enough to answer for me. "No, they had a dispute over a minor question."

"Turk tried to kill Mose with a pitchfork," Nan spoke up, and the preacher's hand, lifting a cup, was seized with a sudden trembling.

"My son, that was bad," he said. "No matter how just your cause, blood is hard to wash off. Who are your people?"

I told him, and he left off eating to look at me. "Ah, a troublous stock. When I was a wayward boy, I admired your father as he stood in the street of Scoville, shooting down the Nesbitts."

"Turk is the only one left," said Mrs. Emory.

"Ah," replied the preacher, "and we must

be careful of him. Were you at church last Sabbath?"

How I hated to hear any one say Sabbath! In the sound of the word there seemed to be narrow-mindedness and oppression. "I was, sir, but I couldn't get a seat."

"But you heard something of the sermon, I hope."

"Yes, sir, until I went out into the woods, and then I talked to Nick Bowles. He is the son——"

"Turk!" shouted my master.

"Nay," said the preacher, "let him speak. I didn't know what had become of the son of my unfortunate victim. Does he live in this neighborhood? Is he poor? Ask him if he will be so merciful as to call on me. And when you see him, give him this." Reaching over he dropped a twenty-dollar gold piece at my plate. "Tell him that I will work for him day and night; say that he must leave off work and go to school."

I took the money and looked at the man. At that moment his face was nobly lighted. In his countenance was a memory made sublime by repentance. Out of my eyes

gushed the tears. Mrs. Emory put her arms about me, and, poor outcast, I sobbed in her lap. But the devil would not long stay away. I sneaked out ashamed of myself, and when I saw Nan, flashing in the sun at the corner of the house, I cried out that if she laughed at me I would tear her to pieces.

She didn't laugh—somewhere about her she had a pin-head heart, and for the first time she spoke to me in kindness. She came forward with her hand stretched out, and upon the palm lay a silver quarter. "Give this to that poor boy, too," she said, but I scorned her offering.

Mr. Hoover called me, but I ran away, off down into the woods and, to harden myself, viciously cut the word "hell" in the bark of a beech tree. Into a tangle of green briars I crept and lay down on the ground, now secure from sight. Presently I heard footsteps on the dry leaves, heard a stick crack, and then voices reached me. My master and the preacher were coming. Beneath a tree near by they halted, talking low and earnestly, and peeping from my ambush I saw them making many gestures. Closer yet they came, sat on

a log almost at my elbow, and talked; and their subject was abolition.

The professor held that it was the duty of the God-fearing ministry gradually to educate the people out of their cruel narrow-mindedness toward an emancipation of all slaves; but the preacher shook his head and over his countenance there passed a hurried darkness, like the fleeting shadow of a hawk's wing.

"No, that has been attempted," he said, "and with frowns and cold shoulders, empty pews and threatening letters, the servants of mercy have been driven from the pulpit. No, that will not do."

"But," insisted the professor, "how are we to reach the reason of the masses?"

"First give reason to the masses and then reach it. But where no reason exists, none can be reached. Let abolition steal slyly into the schools. Let it loiter among the types of the local newspaper."

"Ah, but the schools are jealously guarded and every ignorant eye is a censor of the press. Wisdom's eye may be blunted by the lamp, but the eye of ignorance is always keen."

I did not wish to hear more. I felt that I was a thief. But was I to get away without being seen? Slowly an opening was made in the leafy and thorned wall, and through it I crept. The professor saw me, but quickly turned his eyes away.

"What noise was that?" the minister inquired; and as I sneaked away I heard the professor answer, "Only a hog in the briars."

Knowing that my vacation was not to be prolonged beyond that afternoon, the remainder of the day was devoted to a renewal of my almost hopeless search for the two brutes, Mose and Tab. I went out to the iron furnaces, five miles away, believing that possibly they might be found among the laborers, and there I closely studied each smoke-blackened countenance. Farther up the creek valley I went, among the charcoal burners, inquiring here and there, but gathered no news of my brace of scoundrels. Then I went home to meet my disgrace. On the grass near the door my feet made no sound, and as I approached I heard the professor talking to his wife. It seemed that he had just entered the apartment.

"Is Mr. Hoover gone?" Mrs. Emory inquired.

"Yes, we parted in the woods just now. Where is Turk?"

"I haven't seen him since dinner. Do you want him?"

"Less than ever. Crouching in a briar patch, he heard us talk, and the vicious little brute——"

I stepped across the threshold. "I am hearin' you talk again, sir," I said, and while yet his countenance was lighted with surprise, I continued: "I didn't crawl into the briars to hear what you said; I was there before you came, and I got away as soon as I could. If you think I'm a tattle-tale, whip me worse than your hired devils did, and throw me to the hogs. You and the preacher ain't the only men I've heard talk that way, and don't you be worried. Nobody could get out of me what you said."

'Walter," his wife spoke up, "I tell you this ill-favored boy has many a manly trait."

'Turk," said the professor, "give me your hand." I did so, and drawing me close to him, he looked down into my eyes. "I have

had little cause to believe in man and no cause whatever to believe in you," he said, slowly squeezing my hand till I could hardly bear the pressure, and then giving it a sudden release, "but I *am* going to believe in you. And after this you are not to work merely for your food and clothes. I will pay you eight dollars a month."

So overwhelming was this information that, unable to thank him, I ran out of the house and hid myself in the althæa bushes, afraid that Nan's mocking eye might see my earthly pride.

"Are you trying to catch lightning bugs?" a voice inquired, and there was Nan, dancing on the dark sward. "Oh, don't you wish I was going off to school instead of Amy? Don't you, now?"

"Yes," I answered, coming sullenly out of the bushes.

"You think she's prettier than I am don't you?"

"A heap, and better, too."

She laughed and danced on the sward. The wind stirred, a bough of a great oak waved, and a flood of moonlight fell upon her,

an illumined witch come to snare hearts and to set her feet upon them. And then darkness fell as if from the black leaves, a white smile gleaming last like a slow dying flame.

"But I will learn more at home than she can at school," she said. "I will learn and shame you with it. I will talk big like the preacher so you can't understand me, and I will laugh at you and you will sneak off into the woods and hide. Have you given that money to Nick?"

"I haven't seen him."

"Well, when you see him, give him my love. His hair don't look like hay and he hasn't got freckles all over his face—like somebody I know."

Now more than ever was I determined to rob the professor's book-chest. With the raiment of the wise would I clothe my insignificance. Now had I an additional incentive—would learn as a spite to offset a spite. The least comely in all of the ages have been the scholars. The ancient bearer of the inkhorn was by physical impediment shut out from the brilliant honors of the tournament. The hunchback was forced into wit.

Early the next morning I went back into the corn field. The sun was blistering. I had forgotten my salaried elation, grumbling that my condition had not been above the necessity to labor. Along the road, happy youths were riding, and in my sight they were enviously glorified; for could they not hunt or fish as whim inclined them? Could earth afford more joy than that which fell to their lot? In their fields the negroes were working. Like the lordlings of the middle ages, these scions were in no need of education. Was not their intellectual awkwardness esteemed as a careless grace? In my pocket there was gold, intended, it is true, for another; but was it not sufficient to take me far beyond slavery into a land which, I had heard, honored the toil of the white man? To obscurity and to ignorance there sometimes came intelligence of what the world was doing; and I had heard of a rail splitter who, though lowly born in my own State, had gone forth to a land more liberal, and there with his genius, with learning ravished from the chance-acquaintance book, with wisdom swallowed while learned men slept, he had shamed the degrees of colleges

and gathered a harvest of the hearts of men. This twenty-dollar gold piece would take me to the scene of his inspiring will—ah, but could I, like unto this man, go forth with the shield of honesty and the sword of truth?

Off on a hill where the corn was low, I saw Nick lagging behind his plow, and I reproached myself for not having sooner hunted for him to discharge my trust. Into the low shade of an alder bush my horse poked his willing head, and leaving him thus I crossed the field, and from beneath a cool maple at the fence I called Nick when he had reached the end of a row. He came, whistling a "Come-all-ye" tune, halted to throw a clod at a lizard on a rail, and then slouched up to the place where I sat on the grass.

"What do you want?" he inquired, turning loose all holds and falling on the ground. "Want to run away and go seein'? If you do, I'm with you."

"No, I've come to bring you something."

"A biscuit with sugar on it? I wish you had."

"Something better than that, Nick."

"Don't see how it could be better—unless it's a knife."

I took out the gold piece. "Do you know what this is?"

His eyes sparkled. "Golly, where did you steal it?"

"I didn't steal it—come mighty nigh it, but didn't. Mr. Hoover was at our house yesterday and he sent it to you."

He got up. "What, to pay me for my daddy? You take it back to him and tell him to go to hell with it."

"No, Nick, he didn't send it that way, and if you'd seen him you would have been sorry for him. He wants you to come to see him, and he will take you from work and send you to school."

I held out the gold piece—let it fall upon the palm of his hand, and turning it over and looking at it he said, "Let's take it and go and get drunk and go up the creek and git into a row with the McLane boys. What do you say?"

"No, you must buy clothes with it and then go to see the preacher."

"And let him shut me up in a schoolhouse? Not much."

"Don't you want to go to school?"

"Who? Me? Well, I reckon not. But if he'll let me kill snakes and fight bumble bees, I'll j'in him. Wait a minit. If I'm goin' to do much gallin' round the country I'll have to git some clothes."

"Nick, I think he'd like to make a preacher out of you," said I, studying him.

He squealed like a two-year-old colt. "Make a preacher outen me! Why, he's a Presbyterian, and that sorter doctrine is a little too much like shuckin' dry co'n for me. If I was to preach, I'd want to stir 'em up an' hear 'em shout. Say, if I put some good duds on an' come over Sunday, do you reckon that old professor would fling another rock at me?"

"No, if you come back he'll treat you all right."

"And give me fried chicken and potatoes with white gravy on 'em? Blamed if I don't come." Some one shouted to us. "There's old Sarver hollerin' for me to go to work." He started off, but halted and looked back. "Say, believe I will go over and hear what the preacher has to say for himself. Don't believe it would be much wusser in school than out here in this hot sun."

"Wait a moment. I told you just now I come mighty nigh stealin' that money, and I did. I was about to run away with it and go off somewhere and be somebody."

"Well, why didn't you? Don't reckon I ever would have know'd the difference. Why didn't you?"

"Because I never could have respected myself."

He threw up his head like a chicken swallowing water, and laughed. "Well, who's goin' to respect you a plowin' over thar like a nigger? Them high flyers a gallopin' along the road?" He started back toward me. "I'll give you half of it."

"No, I won't take it."

"Well, mebby over at the preacher's house I can steal you one. Good-bye and much obleeged to you."

CHAPTER VI

THE ROBBERY

WAS honest enough to give to Nick his money, but that night I was enough of a thief to steal three books from the professor's chest, and with spiteful Nan in my mind I read until my candle ends gave out and then went to bed, to be called a moment afterward, it seemed.

We were giving to the corn a final plowing, and by daylight I was in the field. In place of the two runaways, an old man had been hired to work in the garden; but as the needs of the corn were pressing, he was sent out to plow. During two hours of one forenoon the professor had lent his hand to the plow, but in the torrid heat he fretted and fumed till I was glad when he went back to the house, relieving me of the distress of hearing his hot puffs and sweaty lamentations.

The old hired man was inured to the sun, and with a slow horse he sang psalms up and

down the rows. A veteran of the Mexican War, he drew a pension, and prayed that the Lord would forgive his covetousness in looking forward to the coming of the money; but when it came, it was his habit to get drunk every night until his means to buy liquor were exhausted, and then he would swear allegiance to temperance.

When I pointed out the place where the villains had whipped me, he said that I ought to feel that my suffering was for a good cause; but when asked what cause could possibly have been served, he broke into a psalm and sang his way across the field. He was the possessor of an old horse pistol, relic of his exploits in the war, and he broke off in the midst of his sacred chanting to tell me that with his "fuzee" he had killed three Mexicans at one shot. Then, more than ever, I yearned to own the weapon. He told me that, of course, the pistol was almost as dear to him as the blood of his heart or the memory of his prowess, yet he would give it to me if I would sneak over to a distillery five miles distant from our place and steal for him a jug of whisky.

Of course I knew that a theft was a theft. If he had asked me to break into a store and steal a bottle of whisky, I should have said him a sarcastic nay; but somehow the stealing of a jug of liquor from a distillery seemed to be different. During all one afternoon I mused over it, and at night he brought out his pistol, and its brass mountings gleamed in the candle light. He let me take hold of the old monster, and I looked into its black bore, cocked it, and even the resistance offered by its strong spring was a keen pleasure. The old man said that he would never advise the shooting of men; but if two men had tied him and whipped him, he knew of nothing more appropriate than to put about a teacupful of slugs into that pistol and sweep them off the face of the earth. But it was wrong to think about such things, and then he gave me a few staves of a psalm. I wanted him to let me take the pistol to bed with me; but with as solemn a countenance as I have ever seen worn by mortal man, he said that the dear old fuzee had not for many a year been bedfellow to any one save himself and might awake feeling strange in the night. I told him that I

didn't believe I could steal the whisky until Saturday night.

"S-h-e-e, never talk of stealing," he said. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; but you mustn't speak of stealing." At the time I thought that he had given a most apt quotation, and meekly bowed my head. "Far be it from me to council you to evil," he went on, taking the pistol and rubbing its brass with the sleeve of his shirt. "But it would be easy enough to go over to Horner's stillhouse Saturday night and bring away a jug. Why, old Horner himself told me that he didn't expect anything else. At the north end of the house he always keeps a row of jugs covered with straw—puts 'em there for his neighbors."

"You shall have one Sunday morning," I said, and he whistled a mellow tune, hushed it with opening wide his mouth, and then said, "Ah, but don't think you have stolen it. Think that you have neighbored it away from where it wasn't expected to remain."

Shrewd fox was this old man Ridley. His "profession" was that of a cobbler, and on his low bench he had caught many of this world's

villainous thoughts floating close down to the ground, but age came on and he could not see to wax in his bristles nor to sew, and now he was the roustabout of circumstances.

That night I could scarcely sleep for thinking of the pistol. Dozing off, I would dream of it, and its gleaming brass would dazzle me awake; and the next day I was stupid with my work. Two days were to be worn away before the coming of Saturday; but with telling of his exploits in Mexico, the old man lightened the time, and at last Saturday's sun arose.

At dinner time the professor told me that I might knock off the afternoon, and through the sawing blades of corn I ran almost breathless to beg for Nick a like half-day's freedom. In a weedy yard surrounding an old log house I found him beneath a tree. His master, old Sarver, had planned to go a-fishing, and Nick was keen to go with him; but when I unfolded the bright tapestry of my scheme, he shouted to the old man, "Don't want to go fishin', Mr. Sarver. Me an' Turk are goin' to church over at Sunset." The prospect of stealing something won him in an instant, and his shrewd

mind suggested that we would better go before nightfall and familiarize ourselves with the surroundings.

"But," he added, "we mustn't let anybody see us hangin' around thar. If they do, they'll know who took the licker."

"But it won't be exactly like stealin'," I replied, attorney to my conscience.

"Of course not," he said, "but old Horner always wants to know who he lends his whisky to."

The first few steps I took toward the still-house were like walking through nettles, and I have since wondered that a boy so reared should have had any conscience at all; but my people, though blood-spilling, must have had a pride in their honesty. At the creek, however, I left behind all regret and merrily danced along the road. Were there ever before so many birds to sing onward so foul an errand? The summer was in the full blaze of its glory. The trunks of dead trees, which in winter stood bleak, were now clothed with flowering vines; the summer grape was turning purple, and red haws, already resplendent, were dazzling in the sun. In the shade the

dust was cooling to our bare feet, and laughing we ran from one shade to another, our hearts seeming to bound like rubber balls bounced along the ground. To encourage me and to make the time happier, Nick told me that he thought he knew where my two whippers were hidden; and in fancy I saw myself creeping upon their retreat, to blow them riddled into eternity. In a spring house we found a jar of buttermilk, drank what we could and poured the rest into the little stream to astonish the minnows with a novel overflow; and further on Nick wanted to set a straw-stack afire, but I held him back. We met a young steer, pretended that he was a wild animal, and stoned him bawling down into a ravine.

Along came a boy in a wabbly carryall drawn by a mule, and seizing hold of the spokes we brought the creeping chariot to a standstill. The boy lashed at the mule, but the sullen beast was more than willing to stand, as it was in the shade. Nick told the boy that if he would stand up and shout that we could whip any two young fellows in the country we would suffer him to go on; but the

boy, crying out that he would see us damned first, cut at us with his whip. Thereupon we waved a salute with our straw hats and cheered him, and ashamed of our cowardly conduct, we rewarded him with a broken Barlow knife and a leather string.

And now we began to tiptoe about stealthily, our actions sweetened with the fear of discovery; for we were in the neighborhood of the stillhouse. Nick knew its exact location, and through thickets and by many brambly ways he led me, going in an opposite direction as often as toward the place, I am sure. With mysterious maneuver he was deepening a thievish delight; but at last, crouching behind a log and then peeping over it, he pointed out the place, a low log-house at the base of a rocky hill. Closer we crept, stealing from tree to tree, and now lying on the ground we saw a man closing the door. He locked it, shook the chain and padlock, and went away, fortunately not coming in our direction. The sun was down, but the moon was full to give us light and sometimes to scare us with shadows. Near the north end of the house was a small window with a wooden shutter, and we

kept our eyes upon it till darkness blurred it from sight. It was not in the moon-flood, and at this we were pleased, for in the shadow our undertaking was more fearful and therefore more enjoyable. Nick whispered that the time was up, and forth we crept from our hiding place. Over at old Horner's house, across a ravine, a light gleamed from a window, and anon a dog barked. Was the beast set to watch the distillery? No matter, we were geared for it now, and to the house we went with a determination worthy if more worthily employed. The wooden shutter was old and frail. With a stone we broke it, and the stone fell within; but as the floor was earthen there came forth no alarming sound. Most eager and accommodating thief, Nick did not ask me to crawl through, but told me to lift him up. I did so, and he slipped in like an eel. The dog barked louder—was coming nearer, and, with the prospect of a fight, I gathered up a club and waited for him. Presently something appeared at the window; not Nick's face, but a jug.

"Take it out, and I'll go back and find another," he said. "We'll want two."

I took the jug, a gallon in size, and waited. Peeping for the dog, I saw Horner's door open. The old man came out and called to the dog:

"Git him down, old boy."

The dog came on bow-wowing. I ran back to the window, snatched the other jug, and told Nick to get out as quickly as possible. But with no one to hold him up, it was not so easy. And here came the dog. I seized my club again and stood at the corner of the house.

Nick began to whine, "Don't leave me."

"Trust me," I replied, raising my club.

Around the corner came the dog, and I struck him on the head. The blow did not knock him down, but howling he ran back toward the house; and then I heard the old man yell, "Fetch my gun here—quick, somebody."

By this time Nick's head and shoulders appeared, and I pulled him out.

"Catch up with me," shouted the old man to some one who was bringing his gun, and away we went through the woods, each with a jug. Fleet of foot, we knew that it might be easy

to leave our pursuers far behind; but, afraid that the dog might track us, we ran into a creek and for a long time followed the stream. It was evident that old Horner did desire to know who borrowed his whisky. We had heard negroes talk of eluding bloodhounds, and coming out of the creek we swung on grape vines to break the scent, and sometimes climbed up one tree and going out on the branches descended another. With our jugs, which never once did we think of throwing away, it was hard to do this; and once I fell ten feet or more, and Nick cried, "Look out there, Turk. You'll break that jug." After a two hours' flight we regarded it safe to rest, and this we did on a knoll whence we could see in every direction.

"These things were filled for to-morrow," said Nick, stroking his jug. "Old Horner sends 'em to Scoville and peddles 'em like watermelons. Did you ever have a better time than this'n?"

"Don't believe I ever did," I replied, thinking of the old "fuzee."

"Well, you do as I say, and you'll always have a good time. Golly, they drove this

corn-cob stopper in here tight. Now she's out."

"What are you goin' to do?" I asked.

"Goin' to drink one of these here jugs up. That's the reason we got two. Didn't you ever drink any licker?"

"No, never did—was always afraid of it."

"Well, you ain't lived none yit. Here, take a pull."

"Nick, I'm almost afraid. Won't it make us drunk?"

"Wall, what do they make licker for? Why, a man never does have no sense till he gits drunk once. If he don't git drunk, he never knows whether he ought to drink or not. If you've got anythin' on yo' mind, drink an' it will go away. A man is putty much what he believes himself to be, and whisky makes a feller think all the land he tramps on belongs to him. Take one pull anyhow. You wouldn't throw me over after I stuck to you, would you?"

I took the jug and turned it up. I shall never forget the face of that moon. One moment it was splendid, and then I saw it water-eyed. The liquor burnt me, but I

ah-hahed, said it was good and passed the jug to Nick. He took a drink and declared it as mild as maple sap. Suddenly my mind seemed to break away from rotting strings that hitherto had been holding it. Upward my fancy shot as if it would find habitation among the stars, and I reached forth my hand for the jug. In the next drink there was not so much fire, and I felt the glow of odd words that came crowding in upon me. Ideas that I had found in books and which, dim after a time, had sought to elude me, now became vivid and within my easy grasp. Looking upward, I saw a shooting star and laughed at it. Nick sang a song, and his voice was as mellow as a flute blown by thick lips; and, wondering why thick lips should be mellower than lips that are thin, I was seized with such laughter that I rolled on the ground. Nick said that it was time to take another drink, and it seemed to me that he had uttered the most brilliant thought ever evolved by man, and, becoming solemn, we stood up to each other and shook hands. Another drink, and across the heavens two stars shot a race, both dying at the same time.

Suddenly a hill arose where there had been a valley. The murmur of the creek sounded afar off and then seemed to be gushing in at my ears. Nick said that it was time to take another drink and, catching at the jug, I swore that he was the smartest man in the world. And then the earth began to buck-jump. I laid hold of a sapling to keep from being thrown off into space, and although in a wild rush through the air, yet upon my brow the wind blew scorching hot. A deathly sickness seized me. The world ceased to gallop and began to sink—down, down, falling a mile a second into blackness.

When I awoke, lying on my back, the sun was blazing in my face. All hallucination was gone, leaving only a sickness that seemed a constant last breath of agony. I staggered to my feet, and the first things seen were two jugs. I seized them and against a rock dashed them to pieces. The smash awoke Nick.

"Hello, there, you've knocked over the jugs and lost all the whisky. Now we're in a fine fix. What are we goin' to do for a drink?"

The thought of a swallow of whisky brought

on a violent fit of retching. And down I dropped in the sun, calling on God to end my life. Nick looked like a yellow dog worsted in a fight; but he was able to laugh at me, though occasionally he retched, too, and looked sad. Not far away was a big spring, and near by the rivulet from it tumbled in a ten-foot fall. Burning with thirst, we staggered down to the falls and bare-headed stood under the pour, with hot mouths open. Oh, what a gift of God that was! Out of the burning hell of whisky into the cooling water of Paradise—what a transition! But it was soothing only for a time. Outraged nature was not so easily appeased. The retching returned, and on the moss I lay, sick almost unto the limit of endurance, but along late in the afternoon I grew better, and about sunset was able to go home.

Nick left me at the barnyard gate and went whistling away, halting to cast a stone at a woodpecker hammering on a corner of the corn-crib. The family was at supper, and without being seen I crept up the stairs and fell on the bed. My book and a new candle were on the box, though not in its light was I

to cull a thought, but in darkness with my sore and humiliated soul to fret till misery was ended in sleep.

With morning I was not well and the thought of whisky gagged me. I fancied that my tongue must look like an old shoe-sole, parched and cupped by the sun, and ideas which sought to cross my mind seemed to shrivel and to blast when halfway on their journey. After feeding the horses, I went in to breakfast and was ashamed to look at any one.

"Well," said the professor, "we didn't expect to see you again. Where have you been?"

"Over by the creek."

"By the creek? I didn't think that anything could make you look worse; but I wish to observe, sir, that the creek is bad for your complexion."

Nan laughed, but Amy and her mother gave me looks of sympathy. Old man Ridley was nervous. He was sitting beside me, and found opportunity to whisper, "Did you get it?" This brought a scent of the liquor so sickening that I was forced to leave the table, but revived by the fresh air I sat on a bench

beneath a tree, soon to be joined by Nan, who came skipping out to taunt me. She sat down on the far end of the bench, humming a tune, and when I looked at her she laughed at me.

"Woo, I smell whisky!" and she sniffed the air. "Turk, do you drink?"

"No, I don't."

"But did you?"

"Yes, I was drunk all night—robbed a still-house, and I think they'll send me to the penitentiary."

"Oh, for pity sake! Who was with you?"

"Won't tell."

"I know; that boy Nick. Wasn't he with you?"

"No, I was by myself."

"Amy's coming. Don't tell her. She thinks you are a good boy, and it will hurt her, but as for me, I don't care what you do."

Just as Amy came up, the professor shouted to me, "Come, hitch to now and go ahead with your plowing. You are falling behind."

While I was tying my hame-string, Ridley came into the barn, and without giving him a chance to ask I told him about the liquor, and before I had got halfway to the end of my

story he swung a bridle as if he would brain me with the bit. "You imp of hell, you ought to be hung up and skinned," he swore. "There I lay all night, throbbing, with my mouth set for that stuff."

"You didn't throb as much as I did."

"Shut up. And do you think I'm going to work in a field alongside of such a thing as you?"

He went out, walked to Scoville, ten miles distant, was drunk for a week; and when he returned he looked like an old owl, half picked.

CHAPTER VII

DANCED HIM DOWN

WITH the memory of my desperate agony on the knoll still fresh, and the bedraggled Ridley in immediate view, yet did I think upon the star-shooting delight of those first three drinks and long for them again. Time after time, in dreams, the scene came back, but never the agony; and thus it is that Old Pluto's broth is ever sweet with promises. One drink of itself is sometimes a habit; and one drunk, instead of ending in natural disgust, lays a permanent foundation for continuous thirst.

One night I awoke, burning for liquor. At first I thought it a natural thirst, but upon the gravelly bank of the spring I lay and drank, and still was empty of the thing most wanted. During nearly a week I fought this thirst, and on Saturday night I went over to see Mr. Hoover, hoping that by word or example he might give me strength. The preacher. a

bachelor, boarded at a farmhouse. He was in his study when I called, and never before had I seen so great an array of books. In his manner he was cool, but not unkind; he bade me sit down, and then through gold rims he looked at me with a sort of duty interest, but when I began my humiliating story he warmed toward me.

"Young man," said he, when I had concluded, "I see you are in earnest, and in that will lie your strength to fight this most powerful of all enemies. It is by no means singular that you should want liquor after only one association with it. All temperance men, many of whom speak from experience, will tell you, as they are constantly telling the world, to shun the first drink. At the start we may be tempted by curiosity, and then, before we know it, we are held by chains; but each time you yield, a part of your force goes over to the enemy. Understand me, not every man who takes a drink becomes a drunkard, but those who never run the risk are sure not to be. In some of us there is an evil seed. Why, victorious as I have been, emancipated as I am now, if I should touch but

one drop of wine, the fight must needs be fought over again. Nearly every man who has conquered whisky has succeeded in accomplishing much in the world. The will does not halt with one conquest, but seeks others. Training makes it strong and aggressive. So, in one way, you ought to be thankful that you are now in a sort of gymnasium. The outcome will prove whether or not you are a man. I perceive that you have more than an ordinary mind. The clearness of your story convinces me of that fact. So, now, prove to yourself that you have more than an ordinary will. Without will the mind may be but as a soft and impotent luxury. So, now, when the thirst for liquor is strongest, rejoice, not indeed that it is putting you to the test, but that you are a master rather than a slave. The exercise of will is akin to answered prayer. It is a God-sent strength; sent for good, I verily believe. Don't take any medicines. That would be a compromise. At some stages of drunkenness it is a disease, but not at the beginning. The disease lies in one's own weakness. One may be born with a tendency toward liquor; but I do not believe

that the taste, or rather the weakness, is inherited. If so, why is it that the boys and not the girls inherit it? Inherited disease strikes male and female alike. I knew a man of whom it was said that he could not quit drinking without dire physical consequences. The physicians said that his case needed medicines. But he committed forgery, was sentenced to the penitentiary for seven years, and came out as healthy a man as I ever saw; but as soon as he came out, he began to drink. The disease lay only in his will. My son, for a time during my fight I thought that surely I should go insane. I had more than liquor to fight; on my hands there was human blood. But will conquered desire, and sincere repentance washed off the blood. Do you think, now, that you are strong enough to make good the fight?"

Within me I felt a growing strength, and told him so. "I was weak to come, but I go away strong, sir," I said; and he gave me the full measure of his smile, though trained down from all extravagance.

"Young man, I am pleased to hear you say as much, not that you were weak to come, for

council is a part of wisdom, but that you feel that you have gathered strength. In you I fancy that I can perceive victory. It will not end in your being merely a sober man. During the brief time I talked with you one day at dinner, I believe you said that in choice of a career you had settled upon the law. Don't let your lack of present means nor what may in the future appear as want of opportunity discourage you. Save every possible cent, and when the time shall ripen, put it upon your education. In the meantime study, as I believe you are doing. And, by the way, that reminds me: Yesterday Nick Bowles came over and yielded himself to my dutiful entreaty, that is, consented to live here with me and to go to school. I think I hear him out there now."

He went to the door and called, and as he resumed his seat Nick entered the room. He ducked his head to me and sat down. "While I was out thar jest now," said he, "thought I hearn you fellers——"

"You gentlemen," the minister corrected him.

"You gentlemen say somethin' about

drinkin' licker. An' it made me glad I don't drink."

"My charge is an adherent of the temperance cause," said the preacher, and Nick gave his head an assuring shake.

"Never tuck a drink in my life," he declared with every show of truth. "Some fellers cotch me once and tried to make me drink—some gentlemen, I mean, and——"

"In that instance they were not gentlemen," said Mr. Hoover.

"Fellers, then, cotch me and tried to make me drink, and I told 'em, I did, that they'd have to cut my throat an' pour it in the gash."

The preacher assured him that it was a brave act, and the rascal swallowed the compliment and licked his chops. I had sense enough not to stay too long, and took my leave when my moral helper looked toward his desk, where, on large sheets of paper, he had inked the points of his next sermon.

Nick followed me, talking with the mealy mouth of deceitful rectitude until we were well down the road, when he cried out, "Rack back, Davy, daddy shot a ba'r; gimmy drink

o' licker, I'll rumple up yo' ha'r. Wish we had a jug."

"Nick, you're the biggest liar I ever saw."

"Who? Me? If anybody else said it, he'd have me to whup. I haven't told you that I didn't drink. I told the preacher I didn't, but I acknowledge it to you. Ain't that fair?"

"Fair! Anything's fair with as big a liar as you are. Think of the chance that man is givin' you."

"Yes, an' think of the chance I might have had if my daddy was a livin'. Why, I might have had a job at a stillhouse."

"It takes a sober man even to make whisky. You'd be drunk all the time."

He clucked. "And wouldn't that be fun? But lemme tell you somethin'. I don't intend to be drunk all the time, but jest when I feel like it. I don't like to be shet up in that school over yonder on the hill, but I reckon it's the best thing for me. I want to git enough education to stand behind a counter in a store and grin at the gals, like a feller I know over at Scoville. He can smile a woman off'n her horse and right into the sto'. And I thinks to myse'f that if readin', writin', an'

cipherin' will keep me in the shade, I'm in for it. I'm one of these fellers that the easiest job fits. Well, believe I'll turn back here. Say, my bed puts me in the mind of a mellow apple, it's so soft. It's all slicked over with yaller, the posts are, an' I don't have to git up of a mornin' an' feed hosses. Jest lay thar an' wait till they call me to come down an' eat. Good-night."

What a fortunate devil he was, I mused. They had seized him by the heels and perforce were dragging him into an education. But he was born without principle, and nothing could fill the place of it. The dyeing of his leopard spots had been done in fast colors. I strove to summon up a contempt for him, but could not. Was I at so early an age liberal enough not to hold a man responsible for what he is? Or was it a weakness rather than a liberality?

Near the roadside I halted and drank out of a spring, but my thirst was not quenched. My fight was on again, and word for word I recalled what the preacher had said. Surely he must have been wrong concerning a hereditary longing for liquor. My father was sober,

but my grandfather was a drunkard; and, mayhap, from that old roisterer had come down to me the temperamental sediment of a midnight cup. On a rock I sat, gazing upward; and how quiet were the heavens, compared with that night when in a new ecstasy I saw stars racing across the sky!

Up and down the road in front of the house walked old Ridley. The end of his spree lay only a few days in the past, and now he was suffering the remorse of it. I was going to pass him, feeling that he was not well disposed toward me; but he spoke kindly, and I halted.

"My son," he said, "I wish you had broken every infernal jug in the world. Ah, Lord! I didn't have any money, but in town I had a kit of tools stored away, and I gave them for whisky. Why is it that the voice of misery can't be heard above? When I get down on my knees and pray that every drop of liquor may vanish from the face of the earth, why isn't my prayer answered? Men pray for rain, and that is selfish; they want their crops bettered. We are told that it is a service unto the Maker to kneel and say, 'Lord, bless us.'

That's selfish, too; but when I call upon God to paralyze every hand that makes or sells whisky, it is not a mere selfishness, but a request that once answered would be a boon to mankind. But let me tell you something right here. I'll never, so long as I live, touch another drop of the stuff. What! A man, who knows so much as I do, throw himself away? I won't do it. I'll soon be seventy, and it's time I was making something of myself. Oh, I've got the strength. It has been asleep, but it is awake now."

Down the road came a wagon, and in it there were men, singing. The night was not dark, and the driver seeing us drew up, while one of the men held up a bottle and cried out, "Well, boys, here's to you." The old man stood with his hand on my shoulder, and I felt him tremble.

"A little of it might not do us any hurt," he said.

The reveler held forth the bottle. The old man, shambling up to the wheel, seized the flask and drank. He offered it to me, and my knees felt weak. A burning water arose in my mouth, my heart skipped a beat and I felt

that I was smothering. All that was alive about me cried for whisky; but I braced myself against moving forward toward the wheel on which the man's hand, holding the bottle, was resting; I moved backward to the fence, and about a post I threw my arm and held on as if some one were striving to pull me away.

"Hop in and go to town with us," the driver said to Ridley, who laughed out that he was too old a frog to hop; but even then he was trying to climb in. They helped him, and away the wagon went, rattling down the road; and long I heard their song and their laughter rising from the distant hills. But before I went to sleep my thirst was gone.

We were at breakfast the next morning, when a man on a horse halloed at the gate. The professor went out and, returning after a short absence, told us that old Ridley was dead. The more vigorous had drunk the weaker one to death. He was in a doggery, dancing with the rest of his company, when suddenly he felt his way to a chair.

"Have they danced you down?" a young reveler asked of him; and without answering

the old man bowed his head, and that was all. His wife and two sons came and buried him, and one of the boys carried away the old horse pistol that had cost me such pain and shame.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD RAT

THE PREACHER had praised me for the simple straightforwardness of my story, yet I had not told him all. I told him of the drunkenness but not of the theft, for that were a confession too steeped in disgrace. During more than a week I listened for reports of the robbery, and in my coward fancy held every man that passed along the road was a constable come to drag me to judgment and to prison; but there was no noise of the crime, and but for conscience I was to go unpunished. With myself I had drawn a compact and meant to keep it. Sometimes of a rainy day we are bolder than when the sun shines; so one morning when it seemed that the sky was hung for an all-day drizzle, I asked the professor to pay me in advance a part of my month's wage. He was deep in some mathematical problem and wished that I had not bothered him. He was trying to square some

sort of a root, and the air about him seemed full of figures, but he gave me four dollars, and I knocked over a chair in eagerness to get out, afraid that having done it abstractedly, he might awake to his error and take the money away from me.

Across the hills I took my hurried trudge, in the woods, in the road, over worn-out fields—saddled and bridled and ridden by conscience. It was after the noon hour, the clouds were thicker and the rain heavier when I came within sight of Horner's distillery. As I approached, an old dog, stiff and with a bruise on the head, stood in the door and growled. Some one called out that he wouldn't bite, and I entered the house. Three negroes and a white boy were shelling corn on a sheet. I inquired for Mr. Horner, and the boy said that he was over at the house. Thither I went, halloed at the yard gate, and a woman bade me come in.

An old man got up as I entered and invited me to a seat. He sat down and, looking at me, asked my name; and when I had told him he said, "I reckon you're pretty much the last of your race."

"And pretty much the worst, too, I'm afraid."

"Well, I don't know as to that, but some of them were mighty bad."

I could have told him that so far as was known none of them made whisky; that those who went at their instance to eternity's bed, went, for the most part, in a sober state of mind, but before this defense was in any way framed, the old man continued:

"Your folks and the Nesbitts kept this part of the country stirred up for a long time; recollect they broke up a circus once at Scoville, and there was a good deal of talk about it. Old Clem Trotter—sold his cookin' stove to get money enough to take his family—'lowed it was bad enough to break up a camp-meetin' or a session of the county court, much less a show that everybody had been waitin' for. What are you doin' over in this part of the country?"

"I work for Professor Emory."

"Oh, the nigger lover, eh?"

"I never saw him lovin' any nigger—never saw a nigger on the place, except a yaller woman that does the cookin'."

"Well, mebby he loves her."

Hereupon the woman who had invited me in came forward out of a darkened end of the room and rebuked him. "You oughtn't to talk that way," she said.

"What did I say? I said mebby. There ain't no harm in mebby, is there?"

The woman returned to her dark corner, and the old man, watery-eyed with a sense of his own humor, again addressed himself to me. "Did he send you over after licker?"

"No, sir, he didn't send me; but I came to see about two gallons. What would that much in jugs be worth?"

In those days there was no tax on whisky, and it was almost as cheap as buttermilk. "Well," he said, "the best is worth about fifty cents a gallon including the jugs. Want to take it along with you now?"

"I did take it along with me." And by this time I had drawn forth one of my dollars. "I robbed your stillhouse the other night, and I want to pay you."

"What, you young devil, was that you?" The woman came out of the darkness and stood near his chair.

"Yes, sir, and I want to pay you—for the whisky and for the broken window. But let me tell you the whole story."

I began with the whipping, told of my hunger for revenge, of my great desire to possess the horse pistol, of the racing stars and the waterfall, and he listened like an old rat. When I was done, he said: "Pity you can't git up and tell that in the pulpit; but I want you to understand that I don't make whisky for drunkards—I never was drunk in my life, and I make licker for folks that knows how to use it. Well now, what do you think I ought to do with you? Confessin' a crime, you know, don't excuse it in the sight of the law." The woman leaned over and whispered something to him. He poohed at her and laughed. "And, sir," he said, "my wife here, don't know me any better. Did you ever notice how little a man's wife knows him? She may live with him forty years, and he can set a joke-trap for her and ketch her every time. Yes, sir, she thought I meant to send you to jail, but I'd see you hanged first. Put your money in your pocket. That window needed fixin' anyway, and as for the licker—why, it has made

a sober man out of you. I tell you, sir, my whisky don't make drunkards. It makes folks honest."

"Mr. Horner, don't talk that way," the woman pleaded.

"What did I tell you? Didn't I say a woman never understands her husband? Now crack my head for a last year's walnut, will you? But seriously, my son, you committed a crime. It is enough to send you to the penitentiary, but nobody will ever know about it from me. No, sir, and I wouldn't be surprised but you'll shame your folks and make a man of yourself. What do you intend to be?"

"A lawyer, sir."

"A lawyer! Then you oughtn't to start in by confessin' your crimes. The best lawyers don't do that. And you offered to pay me. That's another bad start."

"Mr. Horner, don't discourage him," pleaded the woman.

"Hah, what, didn't I tell you? Sue, I reckon you better git back to cardin' of your bats. You understand wool better'n you do me. Know more about a sheep in one minute than you do me in a whole year. You

haven't been to dinner, have you, sonny? Don't lie to me, that is, unless you are fully determined to be a lawyer. Have you been to dinner?"

"No, sir; but I ain't hungry."

"Bound to lie to me. Sue, set out some of them corn-field beans and a pone or two of that corn bread. Go in there with her, sonny."

While I was eating in a sort of shed room he came and sat down near a window, in the light, where I could take closer note of his features. But I had no reason to revise my judgment that he looked like a rat. After dinner he invited me to view the mysteries of his distillery, but the place was reproachful to me, and I told him so. He said that I was picking up prejudices early in life, declaring that when a boy does that he usually gets a sufficient number to last him into old age and failure. At our parting he shook me warmly by the hand as if I had done him a favor, rather than to have robbed him; and I went away holding him warm in gratitude.

Strange it was, I mused, that he could make whisky and during all his life drink of it with-

out getting drunk; and I thus spoke to a man who invited me to ride in his ox-cart. The fellow laughed. "Why, old Horner is drunk two-thirds of his time," he said. "Ah, it is a hard matter to corner whisky into telling the truth."

As it was too wet to work in the field, I turned aside before reaching home to visit my old friend, Champ Jones. He was standing in the door of his cabin, and as he saw me coming out of the timber shouted, "Oh, I've got something to eat sure enough now—quail eggs. It's pretty late in the season, but I found two nests this morning and got about a peck of eggs, fresh as white clover. The old quails took on a good deal, and I begged their pardon, which was about the best I could do. Could have killed them to relieve them of distress, but hadn't the heart. Come in. The professor was over this morning, and it wasn't long before we bristled like boar shotes; but his little daughter, Nan, was with him, and we didn't fight. Sit down here. Those eggs will be done in about a minute. They want to be hard boiled. Some fellow writing in old Greeley's paper says that quail eggs are as

high-up food as a man can eat; talks as if he had made a discovery. I could have told him years ago; and old Horace printed it alongside of the pictures of a runaway nigger and a bloodhound. Lorenzo, that is as smart a little girl as I ever saw. And she's a beauty, too—but a sort of cruel beauty, the kind that is sure to make some man miserable. I wonder if it is possible for a man to be happy 'long with a beautiful woman? If her beauty palls on him, he's lost something; and if it don't pall, he's afraid that he *will* lose something; so there you are. Now I'll take the eggs off."

The evening was gathering darkness; several hours had passed since my snack at the distiller's house. No daintier dish was ever served in a tin pan, and yet was I not inclined to eat. What had taken away my appetite? Nan—his ungentle picture of her? Could it be that ambushed in my breast there was love for her? Impossible, and yet when he spoke of her, I felt the blood tingling my full length. I could with pleasure think of Amy or in mind hold an agreeable picture of her; and in her presence it was soothing to note the softness of her voice and the sympathetic grace of her

manner. Neither in talking to her nor in hearing others speak of her was there the least embarrassment; but of Nan, how different! She was a spite, a something to make one feel mean. Then why should old Champ's judgment of her fill me with a quaking dread?

"Why do you think she's cruel?" I asked, sitting close to the box table, shelling eggs.

"Oh, because she's born venomous, I reckon. Don't know, however, that I ought to say that. It may be that I was once stung; but I'll say this, and let it serve as a correction for all that I have yet said: 'When such women do love, they love to death.'"

"But if a—a man loved her, wouldn't that make him happy?"

"Of course. What put that into your head?"

"You said that a beautiful woman rarely made a man happy."

"Yes, but she'll never be beautiful, except possibly to people that have a wild idea of beauty. To me she would be—well, what you might call too restless and sensational. She's too much like a humming bird; she doesn't rest. True beauty ought to be restful."

"And then tiresome, mebby," I replied.

"Eh, now, what do you know about it? Lorenzo, you don't look as if you'd ever been a student of beauty. But how have you been getting along since I saw you? Got your pepper-box yet?"

"I have thrown it away—tried to shoot it, but it wouldn't go off. Tried to get a horse pistol from old Ridley—did you know him?"

"Well, I ought to recollect him. He was one of the witnesses that sent me to the penitentiary, but he didn't do more than tell the truth. Didn't seem to me, however, that the simple truth ought to have yielded him whisky enough to keep him drunk for nearly a year. What about him? How is he getting along?"

"He's got along about as far as he can go. Didn't you know he was dead?"

"Hadn't heard a word of it, but I don't go anywhere, and people rarely stop here. Maybe the professor would have told me; but, as I told you, we bristled at once, and in the argument that followed we had but little time for neighborhood gossip. Tried to get his horse pistol, you were saying."

I told him my story, including the visit to

the preacher and the call upon the distiller. He laughed. "Man lives only in patches, you know; and between the patches there is sand without even a weed growing. That was one of your patches. And the old rat wouldn't take the money. Don't see how he could. Well, sir, speaking of him reminds me that the curse of the South, largely including Kentucky, is whisky and slavery. I won't say that Kentucky is half drunk all the time, but half of Kentucky is always drunk. And something's got to happen. Things can't go on this way; it's too unnatural. We are a hothouse with the glass broken, letting in the cold air. Our civilization is the most strained the world ever saw. See that newspaper behind the clock? It's full of dire prophecy, I tell you. Away off yonder a cloud is gathering, and there will be a thunder storm and a dark night will follow it."

For a long time he talked about the disasters that were sure to fall upon the country, but having heard such preaching all my years, I gave to it little heed. The night was black, and in the woods I had to feel my way from tree to tree, I got lost and came out upon the

shores of the noisy creek, groped back into the woods and at last found my way into the cleared land.

In the room where the girls slept a light was burning, and as I approached, I fancied that upon the curtain Nan's shadow was dancing, unrestful creature that she was. Long I stood there in the rain, for the clouds had thickened; and when the light went out, I imagined that in the dark Nan was still dancing, practicing a new mockery to put upon me. But in my room gentle Amy came to mind, for there was arranged my library. The candle burned with never a splutter, the heavy air was so still; but I could not read, though I caught one sentence: "Some hearts are created to endure a life-long torture," and as I lay half asleep it seemed that Nan was dancing, tossing up those words as a juggler keeps balls in the air.

CHAPTER IX

TOGETHER ON A HORSE

THE TIME crept along, and I lived in patches, as old Champ would have said. The corn was laid by, and now I was free for days at a time to read or to roam in the woods. The fall of the year was at hand, and they were making ready to send Amy off to the seminary. In our household this was of exciting moment, and one day Nan went over to a neighbor's to tell about it. Rain began to fall, continuing until dark, and then I was sent on a side-saddled horse to fetch her home. When I arrived, dripping, at the door, she frowned upon me, for she wanted to remain over night; but willful as she was she did not presume to disobey her father, and he had sent his command. The rain had ceased, and in the ragged sky there was a half moon. I offered to walk, but in the presence of the neighbors she was ashamed to consent; so I got behind her on the horse. For a time

she sang as we cantered along the road. Suddenly the horse shied, and I caught her about the waist.

"Turn me loose!" she cried.

I did so and apologized: "I was afraid you'd fall."

"I'd rather you'd let me. You grab like a bear."

"Were you ever grabbed by a bear?"

"Yes, just then."

Through the mud we splashed. "I am thankful to you for one thing," I said.

"What's that?"

"You didn't tell the folks I was drunk."

"Do you think I'm a tattle-tale?"

"No. But how did you find out I was drunk?"

"Didn't—guessed it. Won't you be sorry when Amy goes?"

"Yes, won't you?"

"Oh, I don't know. Somehow with her goodness she makes me sad."

"I didn't know anything could make you sad." The horse shied again, and I clasped her about the waist.

"Don't! I believe you make the horse do

that. And if you do it again you'll walk. If you want to grab girls, why don't you go among your own class?"

This sent hot blood to my head. "My class is as good as yours," I replied. "My people were captains in the Revolution. They didn't leave me money, but they left something that makes me prouder—the fact that they were brave. I won't ride with you."

I slid off the horse. "You are more skittish than the horse," she said. "Come, get back up. It's a good ways home, and the road's muddy. Here's a stump. Get on it, and I'll——"

"I won't ride with you."

"Yes, and you'll tell father, and he'll scold me."

"Do you take me for a tattle-tale?"

"Oh, making use of it, are you? But come on, if you're coming."

"I'm not coming. I'd swim through mud rather than ride with you."

Cutting through a nearer way, I was at the gate when she rode up. Without a word I helped her down; and as soon as we came into the light, she made a mouth at me and

called me "Smarty." And that night so completely did I dismiss her from my mind, that Amy's book was read and her candle was burned low.

The days flew fast, for with me it was a sort of vacation, and soon came the time for Amy's departure. To the great seat of learning her mother was to accompany her, and in the family barouche I was to drive them there. The professor did not waste many words at the parting. He told his daughter that it was against his will and his judgment, and huffed off into the house. Nan rode with us until her mother forced her to get out, and then we drove along in tears.

It was nearly sunset, when there burst upon me a sight that brought tears to my eyes—Old Blood, the sacred spot of this whole earth. There was the old log house, strong as a battlement, the little graveyard on the hill, and the majestic whirl of water gushing from the ground. I begged my mistress to let me stay awhile, and she consented, as it was not much further to the inn where we were to put up for the night. In that old graveyard my people were buried, my father

and my murdered mother. Rough stones with the neighborhood stonecutter's lettering marked the graves. Among those sleeping there, how few had died in the natural bed of death! I could recall but one, a little child; yes, one other, an old man who escaped the early storms of a wild country to die at ninety in a calm.

The door of the old house was locked; but I raised a window and entered. Within, it was dark, but I found a bit of candle on the master's desk, lighted it, went to my old bench in a corner, and sat there until Mrs. Emory called me. The old place had not changed; my oaken seat was the same, and still as of yore one leg was gone, snatched out, I remembered, by one of the Bryan boys to crack the head of Sandy Tolliver.

At the inn where we stayed there had occurred a fight between the Griffins and the Nesbitts, the first or possibly the second "general engagement." And at school I was proud to be told time and again that our side was the winner, counting the holding of the ground but not the number of killed and wounded. I had heard my Uncle Gabe say that my

father killed a Nesbitt in a little room that had a red sun painted on the plastered wall, and I begged the landlord to let me make my bed there; but he refused until I gave him my reason, and then he bowed to me and called me a part of the history of his famous house. So in that room I slept, but did not dream of battle; I thought that Nan, in silver slippers, was dancing on my brow.

The remainder of the journey took but little more than half of the next day; but we remained at the seminary over night, greatly to my embarrassment, for the girls peeped at me from behind hall doors and made signs that caused laughter at my expense. Early in the morning there was another tearful farewell, and sadly Mrs. Emory sat back in the vehicle, not speaking until we must have been five miles on our homeward road. Then she asked me if I were happy. Such a question had never before been put to me. Happy! I had never thought of such a thing. I had never known but one Elysium, and that was a disgrace—the time when with Nick I viewed the star-popping heavens. That could never be again; it was but the flashing tinsel that

meant beggary through life and a shameful death at last. So quickly had I been shunted off upon this musing that I had not answered Mrs. Emory's question, and she repeated it.

"Happy, did you say, Ma'm? Don't believe I'd know how to be."

"Oh, but you mustn't feel that way. God grants happiness to every one that believes in Him. Don't we treat you well, Turk?"

"Yes, Ma'm, better than I have ever deserved."

"You mustn't feel that way, either. Turk, I believe you are a boy of strong character. Some people think you homely, but I don't."

Ah, unkind kindness. My freckles marked me for comment and for ridicule. I expected no compliments, but Mrs. Emory's "oneness" in not thinking me "homely" hurt worse than if, like Nan, she had mocked me.

Upon arriving at home, late in the afternoon, we found the professor and Mr. Hoover hot in an argument. The professor made a pretense of breaking off, when the vehicle drew up at the gate, and he came out, but continued to talk back over his shoulder at the minister, who followed him part way. The

learned man split a long word to kiss his wife, and led her to the house, still talking; he shook a finger at the preacher to emphasize a new point, and when to the visitor Mrs. Emory began to speak of her daughter, the professor broke in with an inquiry, "Ah, yes, how did you leave Amy?"

"Oh, my dear, I am astonished that you should ask," she answered, turning upon him with a slight bow and a pickle smile.

"But I assert," declared the professor, speaking to Hoover, "that when he denounced Copernicus he forfeited all claim to philosophy. Bruno would not have accepted him as a fellow; and your assertion that he furthered the great ends of Aristotle is far from true." And then he began to wince. His wife's sarcasm had penetrated at last. "Why, Louise, you do me a great wrong. I am as anxious about our daughter as you are. Mr. Hoover and I were discussing something of most momentous interest. He holds that Bacon—"

"Oh, hang Bacon," said Mrs. Emory, now laughing.

"In the smoke house," Nan tripped in, with a toss of her midnight head.

Depositing in the house some bundles that I had brought from the barouche, I went out to unharness the horse. Nan came along to help me, she said, but, in fact, to hinder me; for when the vehicle had been backed under the shed, she was in the way of every move I made.

With her fingers crossed and held before her eyes, she said, "Here's the way you'll look when you're in jail." She seized a strap that I was unbuckling. "Let me; you can't," she cried.

How brown were her hands, and with briar scratches upon them; and her fingers, god-artist fancies turned to human flesh! She touched my hand. The thrill made me jump; and when she asked what was the matter I replied, "I thought a wasp stung me."

I asked her what she would do if I should snatch her hand and kiss it, and she said, "I would box your motley jaws."

Instead of making me angry it made me laugh. I seized her hand and kissed it; and with a slap she made my ears ring, but it was a thrilling tune.

"I'll soon be seventeen," I said.

"What of that?" she replied. "Once we had a mule, and I remember hearing father say it was seventeen."

"Let me unbuckle that."

"I won't. Get away. Whoa, Tom." How sweet and how kindly was her voice when she spoke to the horse!

"I heard some one say you'd never make a man happy."

"I'm never going to try."

"But sometime there might come along a man that would rather be miserable with you than happy with any one else."

"He'd be a fool."

"Yes, that's the sort of a man to love you."

"And what sort of a woman would it be to love you?"

"More angel than human, I reckon."

"No, more idiot than anything."

"I feel like I'm going to kiss your hand again."

"And I feel like I'm going to hit you with something harder than my hand."

"Now that Amy's gone, let us be friends, won't you?"

"I could never be friends with you. Your people killed folks, and you get drunk."

"If you'll promise to like me, I'll promise never to drink and never to kill anybody. I'll let everybody run over me; and if I meet Mose and Tab I'll take off my hat and bow to 'em."

"Like you? I couldn't. Why do you want me to?"

"Because it makes me—makes me suffer when I know you don't."

"Then you are going to be like the poor man that keeps a tollgate away over on the pike."

"How like him?"

"An invalid all your life."

She climbed up into the loft and threw down fodder, and I wished that she might fall, so that I could catch her and convince her that I had saved her life. I held up my hand to help her down. She leaped past me. I caught at her, seized her skirt and tore it. She fell upon her knees, and got up like an angry cat. Her mother called. She went out, I following her; and once she turned about, hands up, fingers crooked, and spat at me. She *was* a cat

At the supper table the preacher said a long

grace, and fierce argument was softened down to mild discussion. "Of all men who in the past attempted to explain Shakespeare," said the professor, "your great man, Samuel Johnson, was the worst equipped by nature. Shakespeare was of the country, while Johnson was essentially of the town. He hated the country. To him no dale could compare with Fleet Street. In his notes on Shakespeare he is constantly hunting for an opportunity to sneer at him. He fancied himself—died believing himself a greater man than the poet; lamented, like a cut-and-dried schoolman, Shakespeare's lack of learning, when he ought to have known that the immortal part of the bard, those golden touches of nature, never could have been learned at a university."

Mr. Hoover stirred his coffee. "Far be it from me," he said with the solemnity always appropriate to this utterance, "far be it from me to detract one iota from the accepted mouthpiece of all humanity, but——"

"This ham was mast-fed," Mrs. Emory broke in. Nan peeped at me with her laughing eye, and it seemed that the air was filled with a hushed but devilish music.

"Very delicious, I assure you," replied the preacher. "As I was saying, far be it from me to detract, but, although Shakespeare came near it, yet no mind has embraced all minds. Lope De Vega wrote some fifteen hundred dramas, yet no one will assert that he was the entire stage of Spain. Johnson, while not essentially a poet, and by no means a dramatist——"

"My dear," said Mrs. Emory, "pass Mr. Hoover the honey. From our own hives, Mr. Hoover."

"Yes, very delicious, I assure you. Buckwheat, I am told, makes the best honey. The red clover, so beautiful and so promising when in the meadow, offers but a scant harvest for the honey bee, its—er—I would say its——"

"Its scoop," Nan suggested.

"Yes, my dear," said the preacher, smiling upon her. "Its scoop not being long enough to reach. And Cervantes wrote a hundred or so. Humanity is intellectually, if not morally, greater than any one man. And no one can deny that Dr. Johnson was a very important part of humanity. I——"

Some one at the door called out, "Howdy, all hands?"

The preacher frowned, and Nick Bowles came slouching into the room. "Skuze me for upsettin' things," he said, "but, Mr. Hoover, a feller—gentleman has come and wants you to marry him an' a gal that he has brought with him."

The preacher departed hastily, leaving Nick with us. They were not put to the courtesy of asking him to have more ham; for, upon the moment of his sitting down, things began to disappear. The professor and his wife soon made their excuses, leaving to Nan and me the pleasure of entertaining the visitor. And the little wretch smirked almost in his face. Confound her, she asked him why he had not come to see her. She honeyed a biscuit and put it on his plate. She tucked a napkin beneath his fuzzy chin and sat back to admire him.

"This here honey's good stuff," said Nick, and to me her smile was as sickly-sweet as the juice of the prickly pear.

"You are so much handsomer since you began to go to school," she said, and Nick

smacked his mouth. "And Mr. Hoover says you are learning so fast." What a truthless witch! Hoover had not mentioned him. "And he says you are going to make a fine preacher. Won't that be nice? I like young preachers. Tell me about your school. You know my father is so funny about schools. Somehow he's mad at education; but he's got no use for ignorance, either. Mother teaches me, and after all, she is the best teacher in the whole country. Have you a good teacher?"

"Tolor'ble. He chaws good tobacker, an' he can spit ten feet or mo' when he's pushed. He's set me to cipherin' now."

"Has he? Isn't that nice? And pretty soon you'll know all about arithmetic. Boys that don't know arithmetic don't know anything, do they? And are you in love with any of the girls yet?"

"No, don't believe I am."

"But some of them must be very pretty."

"Yes, puttier than a circus wagon. But I ain't got much time for 'em."

"That's right. You pay attention to your books, and when the time comes, why, you'll—

yes'm, I'm coming." Her mother had called her. She smiled at Nick, and halting at the door she threw a kiss at him and ran away.

"I've noticed," said the yellow gourmand, "that fellers what goes to school are a good deal mo' stronger among the gals than fellers what don't. Ever notice it?"

"I noticed some time ago you were about the biggest liar I ever saw, and now I notice you're a fool."

"Ain't gittin' jealous, are you? 'Lowed from what you said, you was in love with the other one. Don't want 'em both, do you? Come, split up and be fair. Don't love this one in particular, do you?"

"I hate her when it comes to that."

"Well, let it come to that, then, an' don't think no mo' about it. Is that her a singin'? Bet she's singin' to me." Mrs. Emory came in. "Ma'm, this is the best meal of vidults I've had in a year. Bet you made this here coffee yo'se'f." And she smiled on him and asked him to have another cup. Or was it that now every woman who looked upon this lout appeared to me to smile? She put away

some silverware and went out. "She'd make a feller a good mammy-in-law," said Nick.

"She's one of the best women in the world, and if you speak of her that way again, I'll hit you with the first thing I can get hold of," I replied.

"What, ain't in love with the whole family, are you? Well, whut sort of mammy-in-law you reckon I'd want but the best? Say, I've got a bottle hid out under the straw-stack. Feller brought it from the saloon where old Ridley died. Must be some of the same that made him die in joy; for they say he died a dancin'. Come, go with me, and we'll waller in the straw and be the rulers of the earth. Wouldn't you ruther live two hours sho' 'nuff than——"

"Hush!" I commanded, clutching a corner of the table and trembling from head to foot.

"Oh, you want to, for I can see yo' mouth a waterin'."

I was so enraged that I could have brained him; but he had told the truth. In my mouth a hot water had risen, and through my lips it stewed. The word thirst could not express my condition. It was a sinking, a trembling,

a despairing want. I heard him say that no one could ever find it out, that once more we would drink and then quit forever.

Nan came into the room. She looked at me, ready to smirk upon Nick, but suddenly her countenance changed. "Are you sick?" she asked of me. "You look like a ghost. Mother, come here."

Through the door I darted, and down to the spring I ran, but to look upon the water darkling in the twilight was chilling to me, and I turned away. In vain I strove to recall the preacher's words; in my mind they were a cold and meaningless jumble, but in my ears the words of my tempter rang like silver, and armed with a stout stick I stood ready to strike him if he should pursue me. He did not, and in the woods I wandered till the moon was up, till a midnight cock away over at old Champ's began to crow, and then I went to the house. On my box there was no book, no candle; the angel to my better wants was gone.

CHAPTER X

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

THE NEXT morning I arose weak in one way, but strong in another. The fight had laid a tax upon the flesh, but had built up the soul. Had I told the professor of my trial, he would have hooted at it. Those who have not gone through the strain cannot feel its soreness; and the loathing in which whisky is held by most of the virtuous renders them but ill judges of men born in the moral dark of the moon. Indeed, it is not a question of morality, but of a sort of physical weakness. Some men would be other than themselves; they become tired of themselves. This more often applies to the intellectual than to the foolish; and it is the reason why men accounted wise are sometimes given to drink. But above all there is a sort of passion, with the tinder prepared if not set off by heredity; and let him who has a strong will thank God for it.

At the breakfast table that morning, and it

was a Sunday, Mrs. Emory astonished me by remarking that she would not go to church, that, indeed, she did not wish ever again to hear Mr. Hoover preach. The professor sat back and looked at her.

"Walter, I mean what I say. Last night in his argument with you he sent infants to hell, and my intelligence—my mercy will not subscribe to such a doctrine. Why, if I believed that, I should hate God."

The professor threw up his hands, as if to shield himself from some blow. "Louise!" he cried.

"Oh, I know that I should be meek, in the most approved fashion of the South; I know that it is thought charming in a young woman to have a sort of impertinent mind, but that a married woman must think through her husband—I know all that, and——"

'Louise, you have a soul to save!"

"Ah, that old worm-eaten club. And if I have a soul, Walter, I ought to have a mind. If I haven't a mind, my soul ought to be saved out of mere pity. If I have a mind, let me speak it and follow it when I feel it to be right."

"Ah, when you feel it to be right. You—

but have not teachers been sent among us and——"

"A fig for your teachers. When it comes to the soul and conscience, I know as much as Mr. Hoover or any other man. I'm not going to hear him preach."

"But, my dear, what shall I tell him?"

"Let me tell him," Nan cried.

"Yes, let Nan tell him. She is capable of it."

Nan was the professor's favorite. He had spoiled her with indulgence, and it was rare that he took her to task; but now he turned upon her a cold and reproving eye. "Little one, no one has asked for your assistance. Keep still."

"Keep still! Why, Walter, she is not supposed to keep still until she is married. Then she may become a smooth, amiable and placid nobody, like the majority of the women in the South."

Mrs. Emory's eyes flashed, and she was handsome. How often had that fine spirit quieted itself down from just rebellion! How many times had she mutely sat, listening to unchallenged error and vicious narrowness!

"My dear," said the professor, rolling a bit of bread between his thumb and finger, "I hardly know what to say. You have so taken me by surprise that—why, come in, Mr. Jones."

There was old Champ, kicking the mud off his shoes; he stamped to the right and the left, came in, with one foot raking back the mud that had followed him, bowed to Mrs. Emory, gave the professor a grip, squeezed Nan's hands, and coming round laid hold of my shoulders and gave them a shaking. He had been to breakfast, but he sat down to drink a cup of coffee, which he did at a gulp, and putting the cup down said that he was out looking for an old nag that had jumped the fence sometime during the night. "I wanted to go over to hear Hoover to-day," said he. "Met Sol Morris yesterday, and he told me they looked for a doctrinal sermon. Hoover's not my sort, and I thought I'd go over and after services have a tilt with him."

"How is your corn?" the professor inquired, and Nan, with her face below the table, began to titter.

"Pretty fair, what there is of it—didn't put in much. Sol said they expected to get it raw

to-day. Lately there has been a good deal of talk about infant damna——"

"I think that's your horse out yonder," said the professor. "No, it's a cow."

"He may be down in our pasture," remarked Mrs. Emory.

"I'll go over pretty soon and look. Sol said——"

"You've got some prize pumpkins," put in the professor.

"No, the corn shaded them too much. Sol——"

"I'll go with you when you are ready," said the professor.

"All right, plenty of time. I don't get out to church very often; and the more I keep myself shut in, the more I'm worried with the narrowness of the world when I do get out. Why, to hear 'em talking religion at almost every gathering, you'd think it was a new thing and had just been put on trial in the community. The other day while I was at work, a stranger rode up to the fence and called out, 'Say, there, what do you believe?' I told him I believed he was a fool, and he didn't like it much. Well, we scuffled a little,

and while I was helping him get his clothes together, I found out that what he meant was whether or not I believed in infant damnation."

"How long have you been living there?" the professor asked, and Nan cross-barred her eyes with her fingers and looked at me.

"I told him that if he believed that sort of doctrine, he had come to the right place, and I cuffed him, and at it we went again, and before it was through with, I changed his countenance if I didn't alter his belief. How long have I lived there? Oh, ever since——" His voice failed, his last word seeming to fall dead from his lips. He got up, sniffing, and I knew that the lime smell was upon him.

"I'm quite sure there is your horse," said the professor, and it was, but the old man gave no heed; he went out stumbling, passed the horse without taking notice of him and took the shortest cut for the woods.

"Why, what could have been the matter with him?" Mrs. Emory wondered, and the professor shook his head. "They tell me he is queer."

"At any rate, he doesn't believe in infant—"

"In that, my dear, I acknowledge he is not queer," said the professor. She had won and at once she became again the meek, say-nothing wife. We did not go to church that day, but late in the afternoon we heard from the sermon.

Old Horner rode up to the gate, and seized with fear I ran out to beg him to say nothing about my confession. There was no time to say more, for the professor followed me, and while I was tying the horse he conducted the distiller into the house. When I returned, Horner was talking about the sermon. Eagerly they listened, as if he had brought news from a battle.

"It was a doctrine sermon sure enough," he said. "Nobody went out, but many a head came away shakin', and the opinion is he's goin' to have a putty hard pull in buildin' up the church. But it wa'n't altogether about the infants, for that was to be expected, bein' blow'd in the bottle. He let slip somethin' about slavery, and then there was coughin' and the clearin' of throats."

"About slavery!" cried the professor. "I didn't know he had the valor."

"The what, sir?" demanded old Horner.

"The courage," said the professor.

"Sir," exclaimed Horner, "you may call it courage, but there are in this neighborhood a good many folks that will call it a crime. And while I'm about it, I'd like to give you a little advice. Keep your mouth shut on that subject, if you don't want people to ask what's the matter with it. Sir, I wish you good-day."

Not a word was spoken until the old fellow had mounted his horse, and then as we all of us were looking after him, Mrs. Emory remarked: "That will be the end of Mr. Hoover in this community."

"Ah," replied the professor, "but it will not be the end of his principles. They may refuse to hear him or they may put him in jail, as they are now doing men in Illinois, but they cannot——"

"Walter," she broke in with a gesture at me—a gesture made only with her eyes.

The professor turned to me. "Turk, if there should be a war between the North and the South, which side would you fight for?"

"The South, sir," I answered.

"What, poverty-stricken as you are? What would you have to gain?"

"My people all came from South Carolina," I replied, and in my soul I felt that this was a scythe-stroke argument that cut down equally the dried and the green grasses of opposition; but the professor smiled pityingly and replied, "And in that will lie the death of a hundred thousand Southern fools. Go out and look after the horses."

Depending from a limb of the great oak tree in the front yard, was a grape-vine swing with a notched board fitted in the loop, and upon returning from the barn, in the glow of the sunset, I found Nan swinging, a sight not unusual; but now on her face was a new expression. Or was it but the light of the dying sun blending with the light of her countenance? Restrained by a spirit of inquiry, I halted, gazing at her, and she resented my scrutiny with the making of a mouth at me—a rosebud bursting—and demanded an explanation of my impudence.

A boy's awkwardness may explain his embarrassment; but no words he can employ will grace an impertinence. I gazed at her as

"I FOUND NAN SWINGING"

she now stood with her arms about the vine, her feet firmly planted on the ground worn smooth of grass. Could so divine a light illumine the face of a girl so wanting in human kindness? Was her soul so independent and apart from her mundane nature as not to influence her tongue and her actions toward one who she must have seen was suffering?

"What are you gazing at me for?"

"I thought something in your eye told me to stop and look at you," was my answer.

"Something in my eye? A piece of bark from the grape-vine," she said, looking upward.

She possessed that lying quality that made of her something of a humorist. Even her seriousness was an exaggeration. She was a picture drawn with swift strokes, graceful in violation of art. I remembered hearing an old man remark, in speaking of a woman; "She has been a life study to me," and I wondered if fortune or rather misfortune would decree that during all of my life Nan should be my study. Amy was a student and knew things which one expected that she would know. Nan was a skimmer of books and

knew that which awakened surprise; but in skimming did she not harvest the cream?

Upon the fields browned by the sapping sun, the dusk was settling. The professor came to the door of the "big" room and told us to come in to prayers. Nan laughed, and I laughed, too; but when I did, she frowned a darker brown than the dun-colored air. Prayers! What was it that had so moved the head of the household? This was the first time since my coming that the evening was sanctified by prayer. Beside an old horse-hair sofa the professor knelt, his wife near with her arms upon a chair. Nan waited for me to kneel, biding the time of my embarrassment, for one unaccustomed to praying goes about it awkwardly. Somehow I managed to get down upon my knees, and a cat came out from a corner and began to rub against me. I heard Nan titter, and shut my eyes, but then I jumped. Had the cat bitten me? I looked up and saw that Nan had her face devotionally buried in her hands, but a pin gleamed between her fingers; and I knew that she was the cat that had bitten me. In his petition the professor did not ask the Lord to sift His

blessings broadcast over the earth. He begged that soon might come the time when the sword of just wrath, stripped of its too-long-sheathing scabbard, would flash in the eyes of men who bought and sold human flesh and blood.

Arising, he fixed his schoolmaster eye on me and said, "Turk, I wish to make a Christian of you," and then from Nan there came a laughter-scream.

"Why, father, how can you make a Christian out of a Turk?"

It was his habit to reprove her, but with such mildness as to give occasion for repeated offense; but now he was severe. He stormed at her with such loss of temper that his wife spoke up:

"Why, Waiter, you are forgetting yourself."

"My dear, I am not. This child has been permitted to romp over us until she has forgotten all duty. Nan, go to bed."

For her that was severe punishment, as she was often the last to go to bed and the first to get up. Her mother began to plead for her; and I am sure the professor would have withdrawn his mandate if Nan had shown sign of

repentance; but she didn't. She took hold of the brass knob of the stairway door, made us a bow, and was gone, and out of the room a sullen light seemed to go with her; but suddenly there shone down a bright light, and looking up I saw that without noise she had opened the door again and was looking down upon us. But neither the professor nor his wife saw the light, and slowly it was extinguished—she had withdrawn her face and had shut the door.

Not knowing how often prayers might be repeated when once they were begun in a family circle, I inquired of the professor if he were going to pray again, and his wife shed upon my ignorance a kindly smile; but he did not appear pleased and, I believe, would have said something to show his impatience, but just at that moment there came a quick knocking at the outer door.

"Coming," cried the professor, taking the candle from the mantelpiece. But the knocking was repeated, and a voice out in the darkness cried, "For God's sake open the door."

CHAPTER XI

THEY HAD COME FOR HIM

THE PROFESSOR opened the door, and in rushed Mr. Hoover, bare of head and with his clothes torn by brambles. Before offering any explanation of his frightening appearance, he begged the professor for the Lord's sake to shut the door and to put out the light, and with that he puffed out the candle himself. It is hard enough to soothe a frightened man in the light and almost impossible in the dark; for to assure one that there is no danger we must employ manner and countenance. So the professor, calling on his wife to fetch a match, muttered aimlessly until the candle was relighted, and then inquired, "Whose mare's dead?"

This struck me as being a most foolish remark for a wise man, upon an occasion of such strain and expectancy; and it was not till years afterward that I learned that he had quoted the Fat Knight who thus had cried

out upon entering the precincts of a broil in the street.

"Walter," said Mrs. Emory, "don't be rude." She was as ignorant as I concerning this quotation; but the preacher was not, for, leaning against the wall and still panting from his headlong run through the thickets, he replied, "No Fang and Quickly suit presses me, Mr. Emory. I have run for my life."

I wondered why a man so scared and so short of breath did not tell what was the matter rather than to waste his words with so weak and foolish a speech; but the professor understood him.

"Ah," said he, 'your words in church—the mob. I see. But come in and sit down. Turk, get down that shotgun.'

We went into the sitting-room. The minister sat down with his hands gripped upon the candlestand. I stood near with the gun, sentinel over his story, and we waited for him to proceed, the professor in the rocking-chair leaning forward, and his wife standing with her arm resting high upon the mantelpiece. The stair door slightly creaked, and the black eye of Nan shot its spears of light into the room.

This was the story: The minister had left the church, more than half inclined to believe that he had not been wise; still there had been no outbreak. But during the drive home the farmer with whom he lived did not speak to him, and when they had drawn up at the yard gate the farmer said:

"This is the last time I'll hear you preach, and more than that, I think you can find another place better suited to your nigger-lovin' idee. So pack up your duds and get out."

It was no time to talk over the matter; for the farmer swore, although a member of the church, and this was taken by the preacher as a hint too broad to be mistaken. So he went into the house and began to pack his books. Many of the volumes were precious, and therefore were not to be thrown roughly into a box; these lectures of Phillips and the wrathful tirades of Garrison were not neck-broken criminals harshly to be coffined; so the work was done with respectful deliberation. And there, too, was a portrait of old Macaulay, slavery-hating father of the great historian; and that must be decently wrapped in muslin. As with strips of cloth the

preacher was mummying Mr. Macaulay, there came a shout at the gate. Horses were heard trampling, and there was a sharp cry of "Whoa!" The riders evidently had reached their destination. The preacher halted in his work and stood listening with a ribbon of muslin in his hand.

He heard the farmer go out.

"Who is it?"

"Some of the boys."

"What do you want, boys?"

"Want you, if you try to protect him."

"Catch me protectin' him. Think I'd do such a thing as that? Come in and help yourselves to him."

"All right. Got a barrel we can tie him over?"

"Got a tub I scald hogs in."

"That'll do. Get down, boys."

This little idiomatic conversation was all that the preacher heard. He went through the window, and scandalous report said that for more than a mile he carried the window sash with him, about his neck like a yoke, though at a later and a quieter day conservatism modified the report.

"Well," inquired the professor, "do you know whether or not they have followed you?"

"Of course they have. I heard their horses galloping."

"But if you can outrun a horse, you are all right."

We used to say that the professor had a sawdust idea of humor. The minister winced, and the professor turned his face aside to laugh. He couldn't help it. The thought of subjecting a friend even in principle to a whipping over a tub used to scald hogs in was upsetting to his dignity. Nan's eye was blazing with laughter, and Mrs. Emory herself strove to look sadder than she felt. The professor turned about with as grave a face as I have ever seen, and opened his mouth to say something, but his countenance flew into mirthful cracks.

"Mr. Emory," said the preacher, "this is nothing to laugh at."

"Laugh at, sir! Laugh at such distress and in my own house, too? I assure you I am—am most properly indignant. But the idea of that farmer saying, 'Help yourselves to him!'

It was most idiomatic, I assure you, and I have always held that the idiom should be preserved. As long as a language has an idiom, it is growing, and——"

"Hush, I hear something," commanded the preacher.

The professor, now ashamed of his mirth, snatched the gun from me and stood near the door, while Mrs. Emory took two derringers from a shell-covered box on the mantelpiece, handed one to the minister, and cocking the other one remarked, "We will protect you, sir."

Mr. Hoover arose with a bow that did him credit. "Madam, I thank you. It were worth this ignominy, to be defended by so noble a matron."

That was high talk, it tingled me, and for hours I could have listened to it; but where was my weapon? Was I, sole remnant of a historic feud, to stand there like the proverbial poor boy at a frolic? I wished for the words of the preacher, that I might say something heroic; but I could not summon them out of the dark caverns of my ancestral ignorance. Yet, hungry for a part in a battle and regard-

less of causes or of consequences, I begged Mrs. Emory to let me take her pistol.

"But," broke in the professor, "you are not an abolitionist and this is a fight against slavery."

"That makes no difference," I cried. "I am in this house, and if anybody comes to break into it I ought to be in the fight."

"Louise, the boy's argument is good," replied the professor. "Give him the pistol."

She handed it to me, and in an ecstasy I kissed its broad mouth. Against my temple I pressed it and seemed to feel a pulse beating in unison with my own. I cocked it, and seeing that on the nipple there was no cap, anxiously inquired of Mrs. Emory if it were loaded.

"No; but it will do to frighten them with," she said, and at this very moment there came a rap upon the door.

The professor stepped back, cocked his gun, and demanded, "Who's there?"

I leaped to his side, humiliated with an empty weapon, but raising it ready to strike. "Who's there?" repeated the professor, and a thin voice answered, "It's me."

"Who's me? Speak out."

"Am speakin' out, as you won't let me in."

"It's Nick!" exclaimed the preacher.

The professor opened the door, and Nick stalked in. "Howdy do, all hands? Mr. Hoover, them fellers from over the creek sent me to tell you they wa'n't goin' to hurt you. They made it up to skeer you, an' I reckon they've done it."

"Villains!" exclaimed Mr. Hoover, "I'll have them put in jail."

"Well, that's what they told me to tell you. Lot of cowardly whelps. Me and Turk could take a couple of corn-cobs and run the whole passul of 'em into the river. Folks, I ain't had no supper and, while my mind's on it, I'd like to have a bite to eat."

And thus it was all a rough joke, but to the good man's reputation more harm was done than if it had been an executed reality. The fact that he ran away lightened the weight of his arguments, and the report that he had carried away the window sash plucked all solemnity from his texts.

CHAPTER XII

HELD HER HAND

AN ATTEMPT was made to punish the marauders; but the officers of the law winked at one another and nothing was done. Mr. Hoover wrote a long piece to be printed in a church paper and came over to read it to us. I thought that it must have great weight with the reading public, for I could scarcely understand a word of it. I was never able, however, to determine the effect wrought by his pen, but I know that his congregation dwindled until he was forced to console himself with a text which promises blessing to a few that gather together.

About this time there came another season of hard work, the cutting and housing of the tobacco. If I had an enemy and hated him almost to the point of letting the blood out of his heart, I could wish him no greater punishment than a sentence to the labor of cutting tobacco. The stalk and the leaves are covered

with a thick gum, and when the plant begins to wilt in the hot sun, there arises from it an odor so sickening as to turn away a sniffing dog. In almost all sorts of field labor, men are disposed to talk; old men discuss religion, and younger ones the things they would like to do, or the money to be found at the end of the rainbow; but men cutting tobacco always appear to be sullen, with no hope far away in the turn-row. Steaming and sticky, itchy, and ever on the verge of nausea, they look longingly at a cloud becalmed in the distant sky, wondering if it will ever parasol them from the rays of the blistering sun.

The sky in August may have been purple, a reflection of the ripening earth; but in September it is a great brass kettle, inverted. There have been a few chilly mornings, the first advertisements of winter's tragic book, and the sun, warned of his coming loss of power, gathers in all his fuel for a final effort. Left free to roam in the woods, how I should have dreamily worshiped that season of the year! Never had the creek murmured with so low and so sweet a music. The leaves on the great saw briars were turning red, and the

air was laden with the thrilling scent of the green walnut. The weather was dry, and far away, on the verge of every hill, a slight dust was constantly rising about the fancied horses of feud bands galloping to battle in the valley.

One Sunday morning, when in the creek and with lye soap I had cleansed myself from the tobacco's fuzz and gum, I lay on the grass in the yard, wishing that life were an eternal rest day. A man halloed at the gate, waving something in his hand. Nan ran out, and as she was returning, I heard her cry, "Oh, a letter from Amy!"

I scrambled up to join in the excitement, and by courtesy was suffered to sit in the door while Mrs. Emory read the letter aloud. The writer began by telling how beautiful everything was, and how much she was in love with her surroundings. Never before had she known that any one could learn so rapidly. "And every one is so kind to me," she went on. "You would think that I am the sister of all the girls and the daughter of all the teachers. Last night we had a ball, and I never saw anything so lovely. The music was too sweet for anything, and I wore my white mull.

Of course I want to see you all, but I'm not a bit homesick; I'm so anxious to get an education, so that I may reflect some little credit on the parents who have been so kind to me."

"She doesn't tell anything, and she doesn't write as if she were in a fair way to get much of an education," said the professor.

"Walter," his wife replied, "do, for goodness' sake, give the child a chance. Having been a teacher so many years, you ought to know that learning is not a jewel to be found in a day. It requires persistent effort." Slowly she began to put the letter back into the envelope. "It has always been a mystery to me why you have such a contempt for colleges, being a college-bred man and for so long a time a professor. Why is it, Walter?"

"Haven't I told you that among professors I had bitter and destroying enemies?"

"But if they had been ignorant, wouldn't the situation have been the same?"

"Decidedly not," said the professor. "If they had been ignorant, I should never have met them, but let us change the subject. Are you going to church to-day?"

"It is hardly worth while to ask me that question," she replied. "I am not recovered from my antipathy to seeing infants sent to torment."

"But, my dear, Mr. Hoover is in need of hearers."

"And so should be every man who believes as he does."

"But if I ask you as a special favor, will you go?"

"Yes, for you I am willing to undergo almost any hardship."

"If you put it that way, we won't go. I confess that I don't like Hoover's extremes—absurdities if you will; but he and I hold in common many ideas of governmental polity and social reform, and as I am afraid that a hint—well, you might say a suggestion—from me caused him to declaim against slavery, why, I am conscientiously impelled to make, at this time of strained relationships between him and the people—make one of his hearers. I believe him to be a courageous man. Wait a moment. Any man would hesitate to stand and face a howling mob, steeped in ignorance and standing back from the perpetration of

no crime, when once fired with a taste of infamous—excitement; and——"

"Turk," said Mrs. Emory, "hitch up the horses."

When the barouche was made ready, the kind woman told me that if I so desired I might remain at home; and she must have been surprised at my answer: "I'd like mighty well to go, ma'm." And I had told the truth. He was so human on the night he came hatless and almost shirtless to our house, that to my mind he had undergone quite a reformation. Somehow, I don't know why, I have always liked to see a man standing well down on the earth. No exalted mind ever regarded meanness with more of loathing than I look upon snobbery. One cold night I slept with a horse thief, and I gave him more than half of the cover; but I would have sat up all night covered with frost rather than to have slept with a snob.

Nan and I sat together, and she pinched me to make me cry out; but she might have picked me to pieces and I would have smiled on her. So I have seen a wild boar-shote have his ears torn off by dogs and never give

forth a sound. After a time she asked me if I were enjoying the ride, and I told her that I was happy, and in a way I was. To sit there beside that hateful creature was a happiness, although a torture. After a while she seemed to repent of her cruelty. She whispered that I might hold her hand. And this thrilled me more than any of her pinches, but I was too proud to show my joy.

"No, thank you," I whispered in her ear, "I will wait till Amy comes home and——"

"She won't speak to you. Hold my hand, sir."

I held her hand, longing to kiss it—held it, and the old field through which we were passing bloomed forth in a million dazzling colors. Far away in the sky a buzzard was balancing himself, and he looked like an angel dropping slowly from heaven!

"Do you like me?" I whispered.

"I like puppy dogs, but not as well as kittens."

This set us both to tittering, and the professor turned partly round in his seat and said, "Behave back there."

I waited till again he and his wife were

engaged in earnest talk, and then I whispered, "If your other hand's cold I'll hold that, too."

"Cold! It's burning up."

"Then let me blow on it to cool it like a hot potato."

"That would scorch it. Turn my hand loose. Do you think I let you hold it because I like you? I didn't. I just wanted to see how big a fool you were."

She took her hand away, and the buzzard was a buzzard in the air, and the old field was covered with yellow sedge grass, and the road was deep with dust.

Now we were within a short distance of the meeting-house. We had only to go through a skirt of timber, through another field, and then into the grove wherein once of Sundays so many horses were tied; but as we neared the place we saw no horses, and no hymn came with the soft wind. But the air was heavy with a smell that was not of the ripened year. Closer we drew, and suddenly the professor exclaimed, "The infamous devils!"

The church was a heap of smoldering ashes.

CHAPTER XIII

A SHELTERLESS FLOCK

HE HOUSE had been of wood and, dried by a long season of the sun, had burned like a haystack. It was evident that the fire had been kindled only a few hours before our arrival. In the dusty road near-by there were fresh tracks of horses and of tires, showing that other members of Hoover's small flock had come and departed. We halted long enough to drink from the spring which bubbled clear from beneath a hillock of gravel, but the water was not so sweet as the eternal vintage of Old Blood; and such was my remark, but the professor frowned upon me.

"No more comparison, sir," said he, "than with water dipped from a hollow stump. Get in, and we will drive."

It was thought well to enlarge upon our Christian duties to the extent of making inquiries concerning the present whereabouts of the preacher. To surmise that his bones

were roasting in the ashes would have lent glamour to the situation; but the mere hint of it gave Mrs. Emory the shudders, though I believe that Nan would have helped us to rake the dying embers.

The farmhouse in which Mr. Hoover had made his home was not more than three miles distant, and thither we drove. The farmer came out to the fence with no very friendly greeting for us and, when questioned, said that he had a notebook in which he made it a point to keep track of things, such as early and late frosts, the coming of insects, and the appearance of strange lights in the sky; but that he had entered no word concerning the preacher. He was a little, nervous old fellow, and chewed tobacco like a sheep chewing grass.

"But you are aware of the fact, I suppose, that they have burned down his church," said the professor.

"As a general thing I have kept track of fires, too," said the old fellow, standing with one foot resting on a wheelbarrow. "I can give you the very day and almost the hour when old Howerson's haystack burned, and I

believe, though I'm not quite certain, I made a 'randum of the fire in Anderson's shed; but my book don't tell me anything about the burnin' of Hoover's nigger-house."

"His church was burned down last night or early this morning, sir," said the professor.

"Wall, that reminds me that I did git up earlier this mornin' than usual, thinkin' that the sun was risin'. The light I seed must have come from the burnin' of the nigger-house."

"Sir," exclaimed the professor, "some one will have to answer for it."

"Oh, it ain't that bad. Don't make much difference what time I get up."

"I mean, sir, for the burning of that church."

"Oh! Well, go out and call the roll, and see how many will answer."

"I had expected, sir, that you were gentleman enough to take this matter more seriously."

"Yes. You know I used to take things to heart mightily? I did; but I quit it since old Bud Wherry fretted himself to death over the loss of a red heifer."

I sat back almost smothered with laughter.

How it tingled and tickled me! How it belonged to the blood of my shiftless race thus to quibble; in trifling manner to drawl out words of apparent unconcern, to gape with surprise at an incident of no moment, to grin at a tragedy, and to assume a color of stupidity deeper than the hue of ignorance—how like the unlettered white of the South!

"I believe, sir," said the professor, "that you have a shrewd idea as to who set fire to that house."

"Walter," his wife began to caution him, "let us not get into any discussion. Let us drive on home." And she took up the lines.

"My dear, wait a moment. Sir, I believe your name is Buck—Riddleberry Buck. Gods, what a name!"

"Walter," said his wife; and Nan pinched me.

"Well," drawled the farmer, "I don't know as it's much worse than Buck Riddleberry would be. I take it that you are Professor Emory."

"I am *Mister* Emory, sir.'

"Yes. You are the feller, they say, who lives without work. Tell me how you do it,

and I'll build you a nigger-house three times as big. You know I love the shade better than any man you ever seed. Sometimes I've thought I must have been born in the shade. Wouldn't it look that way to you? Plant any sorghum molasses this year?"

"Sir, an officer of the law will call on you."

"You know I ought to be an officer of the law myse'f? I ought, for my grandaddy shot a constable."

The professor took up the lines, cast upon Mr. Riddleberry Buck a look of contempt, and drove off. I looked back and saw the old fellow standing in the yard, with his hands behind him, and with his neck stretched out toward us.

"It is said," remarked the professor, "that a certain phase of American character is slowly passing away. Would that the passing were faster. There are thousands of ways to work other than with a hoe; but unless one goes out and delves in the field, the people of this community term him lazy. Turk, I am getting up a school reader that will as far surpass old McGuffy as—well, as far as McGuffy surpasses Goodrich."

"They use McGuffy at Old Blood, sir," I remarked, and the professor turned about with a snarl.

"Will you desist, sir, from ever again mentioning that name to me? It is hateful in my ears. If you think that on your part it is impossible, go and live with Buck—Riddleton Buck, sir."

"I believe I could run back there and learn something about the preacher," I said, and Mrs. Emory spoke up.

"That wouldn't be a bad idea, Walter. Turk, you run back, and we'll wait here in the shade."

I jumped out and halted a moment, hoping that Nan would offer to go with me, but she didn't; so I ran back as fast as I could and found the old fellow walking up and down in the yard.

"Come in," he called out pleasantly enough; and when I entered the enclosure he said, "I believe you and me are sorter kin." I had no idea of any relationship and told him so, whereupon he said, "Well, in a way—one of my ways. Them fellers that whipped you that time caught me over by the crossroads

the same evenin', and lit into me for nothin' in the world except that they had been drinkin', and larruped me till I couldn't more'n git home. I've never mentioned it before—don't like to tell about bein' whipped, you know. I heard about you lookin' for 'em, and I looked, too, and I hope that one of these days the good Lord with His many blessin's will let me find 'em. They sent you back to find out something, eh?"

I told him that I had returned upon my own suggestion, and he laughed. "Yes, you are closer to me than them folks. He's a putty high-headed feller for a man with his fence corners full of weeds. Now, about the burnin' of that church—I don't know who done it. Mebby it was the fellers that skeered the preacher, and mebby it was just one man that sneaked over there jest befo' the sun riz. More likely one man; but I tell the truth when I say I don't know who. A good many enemies have riz up ag'in Hoover; but there ain't goin' to be much inquiry by the law. The place had begun to stink of nigger wool, you know."

"But where is the preacher now?" I inquired.

"Well, I let him stay here till last night—to give him plenty of time to git his duds away—and then hauled him over to a cabin on the Austin Branch, about two miles from here. He's goin' to stay there till he can get clear of the neighborhood. My opinyine is, he's goin' up North and lecture ag'in the white folks down here; and it don't make no diffunce how ignunt a man is nor how big a liar, when he goes up there to talk about the South, they put sugar on him and swallow him whole. You'll find him in the cabin over thar a washin' of his shirts, if it wan't Sunday. Want a dram?"

I got away from him faster than I had come. Were those racing stars never to fade from the dark sky of my lowering mind? Was that spurt of a new current, hotter than the blood of a sweet revenge, ever to remain in my memory? Of fighting, the gods grew weary and rested, but old Satan never tires.

Nan lifted the leather curtain and peeped at me as I came running through the dust. And, when panting I climbed into the vehicle, the professor inquired, "Is he after you, sir?"

My news was received with much satisfac-

tion, and touching up the horse we drove toward the preacher's cabin, a mere hut near a rivulet. Nan cried out at the romantic beauty of the scene as we approached: the spreading trees, the green grass sheltered from the burning sun, the wild vines; but the professor was sad as he viewed the place of lonely banishment, and he repented having laughed when the frightened man came running out of the dark night.

"I ought to have been more serious," said he. "Ah, and in my heartless levity how much did I differ from that—that infernal Riddleberry Buck? Frail, frail, all of us. I ought not to have laughed at his distress."

The cabin was low and covered with clapboards. From a chimney, built of sticks and roughly plastered with mud, a slow coil of smoke was issuing into the still air. On the thick mat of grass the wheels made no sound. The door stood open. The professor halloed, but there was no answer from within the cabin. Thereupon we got out of the barouche and approached the door. There was no one within, but a fire was burning on the flagstone hearth, and on the coals a pot was boil-

ing. We entered. On the table was a bread trough, and in it made-up meal in preparation for a corn cake. From a rafter hung a flitch of bacon. In a corner was a low bed, spread with a red blanket. All these features, so homely of ordinary life in our part of the country, might have told of an abode other than that of the preacher's; but in another corner were boxes of books, piled one upon another until the top one reached well up to the rafters, and there, too, in the dusk was the portrait of the elder Macaulay, with hard-set lips, grim and determined in the gloom.

"This is the place," said the professor. "Now I wonder where our unfortunate friend can be?"

Of further speculation we were relieved, for at that moment there fell a footstep at the door, and in came Mr. Hoover carrying a pail of water. Our greeting of him was as hearty as if we had found him in the snuggest of quarters, and upon us he shed the smile of martyred contentment. He placed the pail on the floor, stepped toward Mrs. Emory, and then moving backward to make a bow upset the water and said that he was honored.

This set Nan to giggling, and the professor was constrained to rasp his throat at her a number of times before she desisted.

"My dear brother," said the professor, "we have come to express our sorrow and to assure you of our sympathy. You indeed have cause to cry out against the injustice of a so-called civilization. We admire your determination to adhere to the right; but why have you so—so projected an inroad upon your own comfort as to take up your abode in this place? Sir, I humbly offer to you the shelter of my modest roof."

There are certain schools of theology that seem to temper a man against all forms of emotion. All phases of the gospel must be regarded with cool reserve, and all life must be accepted as the mandate of unalterable Providence. Mr. Hoover had gone through one of these schools, and without a tremor of voice he could sentence the soul of a child to the "lake of molten lead"—but still he was not devoid of feeling. Of this he had given evidence on two occasions: once when with most human flight he cleft the dark wind, and now when a tear gleamed in his eye.

"No," he said, "I must abide here until the proper time of my departure. And, indeed, what could be more in keeping with the despairing spirit of man? But I assure you that I am not unhappy here. I am so close to nature that I feel all of her throbs and her pains. Indeed, so contented have I been here that I scarcely note the passing of time. Beneath this tree, I am living poetry. Here is the forest of Arden. Yonder is the rivulet where, in my fancy, the wounded deer weeps 'into the needless stream.' On the green boughs hangs many a sonnet for the lover of nature. All this I shall embody into a sermon and preach it to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" said Mrs. Emory, glancing at the professor, who blinked his eyes in astonishment.

"To-morrow," repeated the preacher, "I will go to my humble rostrum as of yore and, fresh from these cool mosses, bring words of comfort. Yes, to-morrow, another Sabbath."

I expected that Nan would titter, but she didn't. With the rest of us she looked serious. The good man had lived in poetry until he had lost track of the days.

"Mr. Hoover," said the professor, "this is Sunday, and we went over to hear you preach, but——"

"Sunday! You astonish me. Sunday! Why, I must have disappointed my flock."

"Mr. Hoover," said the professor, "your shepherdless flock is without shelter. Some one has burned your church."

I was closely watching the preacher's face, and the change in his countenance put me in mind of the shadow of a leaf waving across a limestone rock. We stood in silence, and it was some time before he spoke. When he did speak, it was as if his words came rumbling low from a great distance.

"This means that I must now buckle on my armor. Upon the stone shall be whetted sharp the sword, and up among the hills and down in the valleys shall be heard the cry, 'To your tents, O Israel.' "

CHAPTER XIV

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

WITHOUT another word the minister turned away. The professor spoke to him; but as one in a daze, he walked out of the door and down the hill toward the rivulet. Mrs. Emory ran forward and, taking him by the arm as he was about to cross the stream, begged him to get into the barouche, but gently he put her back from him and waded through the water. We watched him as he climbed the ridge that ran along at the base of a higher hill, and here he halted, turned, and waving his hand, rumbled back at us, "To your tents, O Israel."

"He is making it rather too theatrical to suit me," said the professor, motioning us toward the vehicle. "Come, let us be going. No use to watch him, Louise. He looks as if he's going to play the gladiator. And that is the American trouble. We are too shallow and showy."

"Surely he's not going to leave all his

books," remarked Mrs. Emory, gazing after the preacher, who was now ascending the hill.

"Oh, no," replied the professor. "He will be back with his band-wagon."

"Oh, Walter, don't talk that way."

We got into the vehicle and were driving along when the professor remarked, "We are no doubt on the eve of a great revolution of some sort; but it will be conducted by greater minds than Mr. Hoover's. I have striven to enter into—well, what I might almost term sacred relationship with him; but somehow there is that about him—well, something I don't like. What is it, eh, Turk?"

He reached round and touched me with his whip. "His eyes pop out too much, I think, sir," was my reply.

Mrs. Emory in a kindly way reproved me, but the professor cried out, "That's it, pop-eyes talk much. There's too much talk about him."

But his wife did not agree. Within the radiation of her sympathy, the preacher did not reside until she had entered his lowly cabin; but at that moment pity cloaked him

about, made of him a martyr and therefore a hero.

"You didn't care for him until he put on his grease-paint," said the professor.

"I don't understand you," she replied.

"Until he made up," said the professor.

"Made up! I'm sure he is sincere."

"So he was when he sent infants to torment."

"Oh, I don't think he quite meant to do that. And, besides, there are thousands of liberal-minded people who believe as he does."

"Well, hardly liberal-minded," retorted the professor.

"Devout-minded, then," she insisted.

I could not bring myself to the point of liking the preacher; but somehow her defense of him pleased me. Was it because he was now an under dog in the fight?

The next day I went back into the steamy tobacco field, hating the world and especially hating Nan; for when I chanced to go near her, she made grimaces as if the air were charged with unpleasant odors, which indeed may have been true, for I was gummed with tobacco sap from head to foot. A "white-

trash" man and two of his boys were employed to help me; but they were so slow that the constant poking up entailed almost double work on my part.

Along about noon on the third day of their engagement one of the boys called me a liar; but his manner was not playful when he did it, and I boxed him. He was not hurt, but the old man took me gravely to task and gave several texts, freely wrenched from the book, to show that I was doomed to the fire. However, as he was of a gentle nature, he said that he would pray for my forgiveness and delivery, and he went away into the shade to pray. He was gone so long that I thought it well to look for him, and I did, finding him asleep under a tree. I stirred him up and inquired if he thought that his prayer was answered, whereupon he cried out that I was a blasphemer thus to make light of a petition directed above, and he set off to the house to lodge a complaint with the professor. For the "white trash" the negroes had a contempt. Could any one blame them?

The professor drove the old man and the boys out of the field and employed two

ruffians that had come down the river on a raft. But we were nearly done when one of them almost brained the other with a pole, and the blood that was shed did not cripple us much. At last the miserable work was done, and I ran to the creek to wash myself back into the appearance and the feeling of a human being.

The preacher's chattels were hauled off in a cart, without even so much as a negro's fife to turn it into a band-wagon. The Ohio River, that watery boundary line between principles and customs, was not a great distance north of us, and across the stream the minister's goods were ferried, we heard; indeed, the professor entered into correspondence with him, and not long afterward I heard him say to his wife that he was pleased at the growing earnestness and practical good sense of our former pastor. I dare say the most of us have observed that when a schoolman commends any one for practicality, he must be practical indeed. But if ever there were a man lacking in this quality, it was my master.

From North to South and back again literary sharp-shooters popped away at one

another. Old mammy nurses, seeking to quiet rebellious children, threatened them with runaway negroes hidden in the thicket. Embryo statesmen in colleges and at Old Blood howled over the outrages put upon the Constitution. And those of us who stood upon the hilltop, watching the gathering of the clouds, knew how slowly a great storm can come.

Late one afternoon there halted at our house two white men having in charge three negro slaves that had run away from a trader over at Scoville. The trader with a large band of slaves was on his way South, industry in this line having been stimulated by recent decisions in Indiana and Illinois, denying to masters who invaded certain territory in quest of "runaway property" the right to seize upon the same. The two white men were most brutal-looking fellows, and we were taught to regard all traders in human commodity as brutes. There were masters in Kentucky who never bought or sold a negro, and these constituted the real aristocracy of the commonwealth.

In a manner that did not smack pleasantly

of politeness, one of the men, who introduced himself as Mr. Croft, requested food and lodging for the night. "These bucks ran away from the Colonel night before last; and, as the main drove is to come along not far from here, I 'lowed we'd rest here and to-morrow mornin' cut across the county and head 'em off. My partner, here, is Mr. Vance."

It was evident that they had gathered no hint as to the abolition principles of the professor; and I expected him to rage, in a smothered way at least, but was surprised to see him smile upon the ruffians and their three-linked chain of black flesh.

Beneath our house was a cellar walled with stone and lighted by only one small window not more than a foot square. With alacrity he flung up the cellar door, this believer in the brotherhood of man, and told Mr. Croft that he might with safety therein immure his rebellious charge. Nor did Mrs. Emory protest when thus her house was to be made a prison. Nan began to whimper, seeing the blood where the handcuffs had chafed the poor wretches; but the professor scolded her, and she shut the outward gates of her sym-

pathy. Of course I had been reared in the belief that the negro was incapable of intense suffering; wise men had written to prove that he was an animal and had no soul; and some of them, and indeed some white men, I am still persuaded, have none. But the sight of those mute monsters, whose ragged raiment had been torn more ragged by hounds, smote me with a deep pity. And it was no wonder, I mused, that the professor could laugh at the desperate plight of the poor preacher, when he had within his breast so changeable a current of feeling.

To Mr. Croft and his co-ruffian, Vance, a savory supper was spread, and when one of them remarked that possibly the "bucks" might be in need of something, the professor spoke up: "We'll throw them down some scraps after a while. And now, gentlemen, I desire you to make yourselves perfectly at home in my house. You have ridden hard and I know that you must be tired; so, when you are ready to lie down for the night, I'll show you to your room. Turk, look into the closet under the hall stairway and bring that jug. Gentlemen, I have some old Robinson

County liquor that was won on the election of James K. Polk. You are welcome to it."

I brought the jug and put it before them, trembling in every joint, and then ran out bare-headed and stood where the cool air might blow upon me. From the dining-room there came the clinking of glasses, and I went further away, pulled down a vine dripping with dew, and pressed it against my face. Dusk had blurred the long-lingering light of the west, and a screech owl was crying, when another sound came—what was it? One of the poor devils in the cellar was singing a strange song, a melancholy chant brought from the jungles of Africa.

The professor called me and commanded me to go early to bed, as he desired me to rise before day and take a turn of corn to the mill. I obeyed, going hot in my old thirst to my garret; and after the clock had pounded off the hour of eleven, I heard our guests talking in their room—heard them sputter at a song and clink their glasses. They had taken the jug with them, and through the thick wall its essence permeated, and I pressed the musty pillow against my dilating nostrils. After a

long time all sounds from below died out, and the upper part of the house was still, save for the snoring of the guests. Suddenly a light flashed, the mottled light of a tin lantern, and stealing to the window and looking down I saw some one at the cellar door. Dressing hastily, I crept down the stairs and went round to the window whence I could view the cellar. Peeping through, I saw the professor with a lantern. His wife stood on the steps with a large package in her hand. The negroes had scrambled to their feet and were gazing in astonishment. The professor held up a finger. The black giants nodded, for they saw something which I did not see for a moment afterward—a file. Now it was all clear—the apparent welcome of the slave hunters and the jug.

"This is slow work," murmured the professor as he proceeded to work with his file. "Oh, by the way, Louise—the saw." Mrs. Emory went hastily up the steps and soon returned with a saw not much larger than a case knife, and with this the professor's work was rapid, so that soon one of the chains fell upon the floor. The poor prisoner stretched

his arms, and then sinking upon the ground clasped the knees of his liberator.

"Don't," commanded the professor. "We haven't much time." Then he turned his attention to another negro, who stood waiting in the shadow. "It is not far to the Ohio River," said the professor, sawing as fast as he could. "In that bundle, which my wife will give you, there is food enough to last you several days and a note to the Rev. Mr. Hoover. You will find him at number seventy-five, Marsh Street, Cincinnati. Can you remember that?"

One of the negroes said that he could manage to read a little, and the professor congratulated him upon his knowledge. Another chain fell to the ground. "Knowing from what vicinity you have come," said the professor, attacking the last chain, "Mr. Hoover will take especial pains to see that you get into Canada." The negro nodded.

I wondered how we were to make it right with the "drovers," or even to offer any sort of explanation. If we should fight them and conquer, there would still remain a palliation due to society and the law. Something

"IT'S NOT FAR TO THE OHIO RIVER"

touched me. I looked up, and there stood Nan. Without speaking we peeped into the cellar, her cheek against mine, and a glory came over me as I felt the warm velvet of her skin. I wished that the work might go on forever; and yet I vowed within myself at this moment of trembling ecstasy that I hated her, because she had been born my enemy. She moved back; the current was broken, and I was a clod again.

"How are they going to fix it with the men upstairs?" I whispered.

"They are going to kill them."

I must have cut an odd caper, for she laughed in my face. "No," she added, "they are going to put powder under one corner of the house and blow out a hole. I heard them talking about it. And when the men hear the noise, they'll come tumbling down; but by that time the negroes will be nearly to the Ohio River. It will be a slow match, and father and mother will be asleep when it goes off. Hush."

. The last chain fell. There was a short whispered talk in the cellar, and Mrs. Emory gave the bundle to one of the negroes. Then

the prisoners, once more blessing their deliverers, ran out into the yard and were gone.

"Go to bed," Nan whispered, scampering away; and without waiting to view the laying of the mine, I obeyed her. Long I lay there, waiting; and then it came over me that there was to be no explosion, that she had tricked me. And in this belief I dozed off to sleep, but it seemed that with the coming of the instant afterward, I was groping about near the window. For a moment it appeared to my half-aroused senses that the floor was steep and uneven, like a rugged hill, and that I was trying to climb to the summit; but the next moment, and amid smoke that came in rolling puffs from below, all was realized, and I understood that I had been almost thrown out of bed by an explosion. The professor's voice reached me in a loud roar, and then came the screaming of his wife. In the room whence had come stealing the essence of liquor, a wild confusion arose. I heard the sharp smash of glasses and the jug bounce with a loud bump upon the floor, and then down the stairway went tumbling Mr. Croft and his friend, Mr. Vance.

I dressed and ran down as soon as possible, and there was the professor, half dressed, walking up and down, swearing that his house was ruined. His wife swooned with terror, and artful Nan was crying with the expression of a cat in her face. The shrewdness of Croft made all things plain. About the negroes was concealed abolition powder and a file. Hastily seized and driven hurriedly, they had not been properly searched. It was not the first time that outrages had been thus perpetrated. Never mind, the damages to the house should be paid by the Colonel, and the hounds would soon bring back the would-be murderers.

Pursuit was useless in the dark, and before daylight the "drovers" departed for Scoville, whence they were to return with dogs. They were pressed to remain to breakfast, but they declined, afraid, it was clear from their uneasy actions, that their employer would deem them remiss in duty; but they ran back upstairs to take one more pull at the jug. The thought that it might have been broken and that its thrilling contents were dripping through the cracks in the floor seized upon me, and tempt-

ing the devil I stood in the room below; but the men came down with the jug, and the professor kindly bade them take it with them. They made a weak demur, but went away with it; and the learned man, my master, took hold of a tree in the yard and laughed, and the coming of broad day revealed the joy-tears in his eyes.

"It was a narrow escape for us all, Turk," he said; "and I am so thankful that no one was hurt. But what surprises me is, how those negroes could have concealed so much powder about them."

"They must have worn it sprinkled in their wool," I replied, and the learned man appeared to be thoughtful.

Well, now, sir," he said, "I shouldn't be surprised if that were a fact. You have hit upon a bright idea, and I shall commend it to the sheriff." And with that he was again seized with laughter and went behind the house. When he returned to comfort his wife, who declared that she didn't know how soon there was to be another blow-up, I told him I thought that we had better repair the damage done the cellar. He shook his head

gravely and remarked that he could ill afford such a luxury as an explosion, and that perhaps the county might levy a special tax to re—re—and here again he was seized, but he turned it off adroitly into a cough and so escaped the necessity of going behind the house.

Shortly after the sun was well up, our two guests, accompanied by several men and a number of dogs, poured into the yard Among them was a deputy sheriff, and with grave caution he went down into the cellar to examine the scene of the outrage. Minute examination revealed saw filings on the earthen floor, and some of these the officer scraped up and put away in a corner of his pocketbook. Through the hole made by the explosion the negroes had evidently escaped; for here were tracks in the soft earth. The door was still fastened with a padlock when Croft and Vance had reached the ground.

The hounds when put upon the scent cried out with a great "ounk, ounk," and ran off toward the river. The "mount" followed, and for a long time we heard the chase, until at last it died away.

At this moment the professor and I were standing at the back fence. He turned to me, stripping an althæa bush at the time, I remember, and said, "Turk, an old woman that lives beyond the sedge field to your right as you pass on toward Goggins, knows how to make clothes for chaps about your size, and I'd advise you to go over at once and let her eye you."

"But I have no cloth, sir."

"Is that so? Why, I understood her to say that a friend of yours had left some cloth there for you—a sort of brown and gray mixed jeans, I believe. Go on. You are a jewel, Turk. You never see anything."

CHAPTER XV

MAKING THE ROUNDS

IN THE neighborhood there was much talk about our explosion. The damage was exaggerated; and a newspaper published in a distant county gave an account of the wrecking of our house by the abolitionists, the serious wounding of a child, and the crippling of the professor for life; but we did not escape the sneers of some of our nearer neighbors. One afternoon I was returning from a visit to the old woman who was making my clothes and who was committing me to memory by degrees, when along the road I fell in with Riddleberry Buck. He was walking and carried, wrapped in a tow sack, several plow-points which he was taking to the blacksmith to have sharpened.

"The blow-up didn't hurt you none, I see," he remarked, as I came out of a path into the road.

"No, I can manage to walk."

"Any of the family hurt?"

"Scared a good deal, but not hurt."

"Ah, hah." He walked along, chewing his tobacco and humming a tune, a sort of timber wolf's lullaby. "In bed at the time, eh? You?"

"Yes, and asleep."

"Sleep. Then you didn't know it was goin' to take place, eh?"

"Did you know that thing was coming down?" I asked, pointing to a tree newly felled by a wood-chopper.

"Well, I mout have know'd it, by puttin' this and that together, the blows of the ax and so on. Can't say that I know'd it was goin' to fall, but it ain't no surprise seein' of it down. Was it any surprise to you when you seed the place whar the powder went off? Hah?"

"Yes, it was a great surprise," I answered, for long ago I had learned to lie like a reception committee.

"And you don't believe the professor man had anything to do with it, eh? Speak out straight. You know I give you the right sort of talk the day I wouldn't tell him nothin'. Yo' folks are all Southern, an' you ain't no nigger lover. Out with it."

"No more to do with it than you had."

"Hah, is that so?" From one shoulder to the other he shifted his sack of plow-points. "I was talkin' to Horner, the stillhouse man, an' he says thar ought to be an investigation. Lou Biddle says the same thing."

"Wh's Lou Biddle?"

"Town marshal at Scoville."

"Well, let him stick to his town. Is he any kin to the Biddles that——"

"That helped the Nesbitts fight yo' folks a long time ago? Yes, belongs to the same tribe and full of the devil."

"So am I when it comes to that."

"Oh, you are a spunky little brat, ain't you? Say, ricolleck the two fellers that sorter made you and me kin to each other—fellers that whipped us? I hearn of them. Feller from Louisville told me he seen 'em helpin' to flat-boat salt down to New Orleans. Have you quit thinkin' about 'em?"

"I have dreamed about them a thousand times, and always a man, that I took to be my father, stood there looking at me with sorrow in his eyes."

"You don't say! Well, I turn off here."

Farther along I was about to leave the road to cross the fields, when who but old Horner should come in sight, on the brow of a steep hill only a few yards away? He was driving in a little old gig that rattled and constantly threatened to fall to pieces. About his neck he wore a red handkerchief, and for a time it looked as if his throat had been cut from ear to ear. As he came along, I was sitting on the fence, and he would have passed on without noticing me, but his horse shied and rattled the gig in every joint.

"Hello, you there, sir! What are you doin' up there makin' a scarecrow of yourself?"

"Is your horse afraid of scarecrows? Wonder he lets you harness him."

"Hay? No impudence, now. Oh, it's you, is it? You've grow'd so much I hardly know'd you—must have grow'd the sixteenth of an inch since I saw you last. I was thinkin' about you the other day—'lowed that as you was such a good hand to rob a stillhouse, you might be a good hand to work in one. Think you'd like that sort of a job?"

"I'd be afraid, sir."

"Afraid of what?"

"The whisky, sir. I never drank any but once, but it has been a fight ever since then."

"Then you are the man to work right with it. They tell me the best man to do dangerous work is the feller that's always afeerd."

"I don't want to do that sort of work. I think it would cost me my—my respectability."

"Why, damn your freckled hide, you set up there and talk about respectability! Who are you to talk that way?"

"The grandson of a drunkard."

"Hay? Sharp as a tack, ain't you? Good boy, stick to it. And if you grow a little more and manage to wash some of them yaller specks off'n your face, you may make a man of yourself. Oh, by the way, you was at Emory's house when the explosion took place, wasn't you?"

I told him, and he eyed me, came closer over to my side of the road and, like an old turtle, stretched his neck out further from his crimson swipe of handkerchief. "Tell me about it." I told him in my own manner, that is to say, covering the truth, and with the lash of his whip he slowly tapped at the ears of his old horse.

"Yes," he drawled, "it was a good thing to have had a witness. But you know men don't part with some thirty-five hundred dollars' worth of nigger flesh so easy as to let all investigation go. And then society has to send round its bill. Do you know what society is?"

"A lot of folks together a-talking and not saying much," I answered, and he laughed like a dog gagging. "Wall, in one sense that is about it; but in the sense I use it, the meaning takes in every self-respectin' man in the community. All these folks together form what is called society, and they may have a bill to send over in the direction of the ex-schoolteacher's house. You recollect some of the boys scared the abolition preacher mighty nigh to death. But they only scared him. The next time the boys go out they may do somethin' a leetle more substantial."

"You mean that they may come after the professor and whip him. Is that it?"

"I have scattered the seeds; and if you want to cover them with dirt and water them, all right."

Over in an adjoining field, a young woman

came along, and with a hoe was cutting the sassafras sprouts in the corners of the fence. Old Horner looked at her, his eye kindling with interest as he observed the vigor of her stroke. "A furren girl, to work out that way, I take it," he said as she passed beyond hearing. "Ah, she may be furren and all that, but I tell you she'd make some industrious man a mighty good wife." He turned about to look at her. "But it seems to me that the hoe she has is a leetle too heavy to get the best results out of her. Her father or husband, if she's got one, ought to be more careful with her and furnish her with a lighter one."

"Do you believe they are coming after the professor?" I bluntly asked as he began to tighten his lines.

"Why, I haven't said anything of the sort. I reckon you'd like to know the exact time so you could be there."

"Yes, sir; and I want to say they won't have as easy a time as they had when they made the preacher tote the window sash." He looked at me, wrinkling his face. sneezed like an old goat, and drove on.

In one corner of our yard there was a shed

in which the professor sometimes pretended to do carpenter work. And he was thus engaged when I reached home, near the setting of the slowly-cooling sun. How strong, at this moment, the recollection of him as he then appeared comes back to me! As I entered he was shoving a plane along the smooth surface of a piece of yellow poplar. He looked up, with a shaving in his mouth, and nodding went on with his work, but when I began to tell of the talk with old Horner, he suddenly ejected the shaving from his mouth, and it hung like a ribbon on his beard.

"Turk," he said, "don't you believe that it was a genuine explosion?"

I told him that I did; and it was, for none but a genuine explosion could have thrown me out of bed at that hour in the morning. "Ah!" said he, looking upon me and commending my unswerving spirit of truth. "And you may use the derringers, and I'll sweep things with the shotgun."

"And are the derringers to be loaded, sir?" I asked, not in innocence but with a whim that tickled me to the end of the toes; but he did not catch my humor.

"Loaded! Loaded, sir, to the very muzzles."

He smiled over the prospect of danger. They might call him lazy; but not with cause could any one charge him with cowardice. And that reminds me that some of the laziest men I ever saw were brave. Laziness is often but a lack of interest in work. Shift the vocation, and all sloth disappears. Al Hockersmith, who lived near Old Blood, but who possessed not the grace of having learned to read at the famous school, just naturally hated to work in the hemp field; but he was keen in looking for a fight; and just as they were putting a halter around his neck, he looked up and said, "Here's this damned hemp again."

Through my mind this bit of foolishness floated and dipped like dandelion fuzz in the still air, while the professor stood there smiling as if I had brought him the most pleasing news. In innocence rather than in humor, I asked him if he had ever killed a man; and brushing from his whiskers the poplar ribbon, he gravely remarked, as if talking to himself, "I ought to have killed him, but I didn't."

"What was his name, sir?"

"Whose name?" he demanded almost fiercely, gripping my arm.

"The man you ought to have killed, sir."

"Let him be nameless. But I ought to have killed him, the traitor. He stole something from me and made my life as slow as a snail's."

"Steal a horse from you?"

"Horse! The devil! Can't you people think about anything but horses? Look at me, an old man. He stole a woman."

"A negro woman that belonged to you?"

"Turk, you are not as complete a fool as you look, and not very often as you act. You have some idea, but as yet you cannot know. But some day your soul may take fire, and the flame may enshroud a woman. Do you know what I mean?"

Of his history I knew more than he was aware. My master at Old Blood had talked about him. "Yes, sir," I answered, "I know, and some day I may understand better than I do now. I believe that my heart is to be broken by a woman."

The old man placed his hands on my shoulders and looked into my eyes. Was it true, as

I had heard hinted, that he was not always sound in his head? I wondered why he had ever married, if the woman whom he loved had been stolen away; and with a schoolmaster's cleverness in contemplating younger and inferior minds, he read my thoughts.

"I did love her, and I do now. She is noble and gentle, like my daughter Amy. But the other one was like a witch and rode me with her hands in my hair. But if you ever say anything about it, I will crack your head."

I stepped back from him, with the scent of whisky tingling in my nostrils, and I knew that he had been drinking. "But not much," he said, catching the picture in my countenance. "Only one dram. Once in a long while rebellious thought drives me to it, but never to excess. Old Dr. Johnson thought that smoking prevented insanity."

"Did he practice in this neighborhood, sir?" I inquired.

"No, he was a doctor of ideas rather than of medicine, and as such would have selected any other community. I would not say it if I didn't feel assured that in every way you can control yourself; but now and then whisky

prevents insanity. A great philosopher thought that a man should go so far as to get drunk once a month and——"

"You mustn't tell me that!" I cried. "When you do, I can feel a knife in my hand and see a hangman's rope trailing beside me. Don't tell me that. Tell me that the great man was a liar."

"Why, what's the matter with you? A liar, of course he was. There, supper's ready. Go on. I'll be with you soon."

When he followed, which he did shortly afterward, his eyes were red, but no other sign that he had been drinking was visible; he sat down and went through with the meal as if it had been a grave ceremony imposed upon him.

That night we began our watch for the marauders, and with the two pistols clapped to my sides and bound about with a strip of black cloth for a belt, I felt that at last the laggard world had bestowed upon me one of its blessings. Ah, and when the professor went to bed, leaving to me the conduct of the campaign! The fence inclosing the yard was my beat, and around and around I walked,

heavy of foot; and when Nan came out and stood, with the rising moon in her face, I thought of the woman whom the professor had lost; for surely Nan was a witch when all the daylight was gone; and I should not have wondered had she seized me by the hair and, like a witch, spurred me over the tree tops and up amid the chilling mists. But she was so beautiful, standing there, and I was her sole protector.

"You'd better go into the house," I said. "It is dangerous here."

Her laugh was as cool as the waterfall that poured upon me after the night's hot revel on the hill. "Dangerous! I'm not afraid of crickets."

"Crickets!" I repeated with contempt. "Men with guns."

"Well, when they come, I'll call father."

"If you are a friend of mine," I began in warm resentment; but she cooled me with her laugh.

"A friend of yours! Who said I was?"

"I never said so, but I always hoped you were." And long afterward I wondered if from some older mind she caught up her

reply: "You hope like some people that profess to be Christians—without cause."

Here duty called upon me, and slowly I paced my round. When I returned, she was still standing with her face to the moon. "You like to look at the moon, don't you?"

"Yes. They don't call it '*he*'."

This started me on another round, and again I returned and found her not looking at the moon, but by its beams trying to read something. "I have some news from your sweetheart," she said, folding a piece of paper and putting it into the pocket of her apron.

"These are my sweethearts," I replied, slapping the derringers and strutting off a few paces from her. "And they laugh loud when they are tickled."

"If you don't want to hear from Amy, I won't tell you some news about her."

"From Amy! Oh, yes, tell me about her. But is she my sweetheart?"

"You thought so. But you wouldn't think so if you knew what was in this letter that I got from her to-day. You can't keep a secret, can you?"

"Ask your father. But wait a moment till I

go the rounds again." She waited till, slowly pacing, I came back to her. "What does she say?"

"She is in love. And that's the reason everything looked so bright to her when she wrote the last time."

"In love?" It was not quite time for another round, and I waited for her to tell me more.

"In love with a professor in the college. She says he is her English teacher, and he must have taught her grammar—first person, I love; second person, you love—and both of us know it will make father as mad as a hornet. Do you know why he doesn't like professors?"

"No. I thought he did."

"Turk, how can you expect me to like you when you tell me such fibs all the time? I heard him say something to you this evening, when you were in the carpenter shop. What was it?"

"He said that some rats have longer tails than others."

"Is that the reason he took hold of your shoulders and shook you? Is that what made

him drink out of a jug and groan and walk up and down with his hands behind him? Are all men liars, and do they all drink out of jugs?"

"I think the most of them drink out of jugs, and I know that they must all be liars," I replied out of the depths of my wisdom, which was my experience.

"But Nick Bowles don't get drunk," she said, and she moved about so as to catch the moonlight upon my face.

"No," I replied; and she laughed. "Oh, you know he does, but you won't tell on him. And they haven't heard of him since the preacher went away, have they?"

"I haven't."

"But I have. A man stopped here to-day and said he was living in Scoville. The man said Lou Biddle, the town marshal, made him tell all he knew about father and the preacher. Is that cattle coming down the road?"

CHAPTER XVI

THE MEN WITH SWITCHES

HE distinct trampling of horses smote upon my ear. The sounds came from far down the old military road that ran past our house. On the road there were, especially in the fall of the year, many travelers on horseback, merchants riding far to buy goods; but I pretended alarm and told her to go into the house. She refused. Pretty soon there came a whoop, not from a merchant, unless he were drunk, but from a night-rider bent upon deviltry or reckless pleasure. I seized her arms, and in a delight danced her into the shadow of the fence, and there we waited. Spirit of blood-loving sire, you must have hovered over me then; for in those moments of waiting, with that wild beauty there with me in the dark, I was happier than the owner of a fireside sitting in honored contentment. About her I put my arm, and for a few blessed

seconds she stood still with her face against my breast. But the sounds of hoofs—blast them!—seemed to grow fainter, and she moved back from me in such a way that I felt the futility of following her.

"Don't," she said. Then came another whoop, sweetly nearer, and she turned as if she would run into the house; but I caught her. Not even her father should share with me the honor and the joy of protecting her. She made no effort to break away from me, but looked up and her eyes were ablaze in one single ray of light—looked at me and—— laughed. And now there was hardly room for mistake. We heard the low voices of several men. The riders had dismounted and were tying their horses. We waited. She asked me for one of the pistols, and now it was my time to laugh.

"But I will stay with you," she said.

"I wish they would stand out there forever and keep us here," I said, and she did not laugh at that. Here they came down the road, silent till one of them struck the gate with something that made a noise like a bunch of switches.

"Go in," commanded a low voice. "We'll knock at the door, and when he comes out, grab him."

That was enough. Out I leaped and fired both pistols, one quickly following the other. A wild yell arose, there was a scampering for the road, and by the time they were clear of the gate, out came the professor. He fired both barrels of his gun, but too low, I could see. And now, as we had spent our immediate force, we were put to the need of recharging, a thing which in those days was not quickly to be done. Leading Nan by the hand, I ran into the house, and the professor scolded her as he fumblingly poured powder from a flask. Mrs. Emory's face was as white as the night-cap she wore; but she said nothing, neither did she get in our way as we were loading the gun and pistols, which at that time I thought was a marvelous piece of judgment, though since then I have seen delicate women wade in blood and with fingers that did not tremble clean their gory shoes. By the time we were again ready, I had given the professor an account of the attack, and he put his hand on my head and called me a brave boy,

which I did not relish over-much, since I now regarded myself as a man.

"We must have peppered some of them," he said; and not till I suggested going out with a lantern was it that his wife spoke a word.

"Wait awhile," she said. And then she smiled. "Ah, they weren't chasing a defenseless preacher that time. Turk, we are proud of you."

I grew about an inch in two minutes and lighted the lantern. "It is necessary to look over the field, ma'm," said I, remembering the talk of some old Mexican War veterans. And I insisted upon going alone, but the professor went with me. Carrying the lantern low, I searched the ground and was disappointed not to find a sheaf of my own reaping. "The ones with the big bullet holes are mine," I said to the professor as slowly we walked down the road.

"You may have all you find," he replied, and by his tone I fancied that he was pleased at the bloodless result of the campaign. As we were returning to the house, there came a lusty hello, and with weapons ready we went back to the gate, to find old Champ Jones

standing there with a rifle as long as a hoop-pole.

"I was coming over here when I heard you open up," said he. "Was down on the creek looking after my traps in the early shine of the moon, and along came one of the Potter tribe, and he said that from what he heard over in town some of the boys intended to pay you a visit to-night."

The professor gave an account of the siege, and old Champ shook me by the hand. "Oh, you can depend on him," he said. "There used to be quite a generation of them around here, and nobody ever saw their heels except when they were running for fun."

There was no danger of another attack, but we "played like" there was, and until daylight we sat with our guns and pistols, to me a heaven excelled in happiness only by those brief moments when I had stood with my arm about Nan. I would not accept all the honors of bravery, but insisted upon sharing them with her, and old Champ shook me again and said that I not only would fight, but that, like all true men, I was gallant, which, in my ignorance, I took to mean being fond of the

"gals." How fast that night sped away, there by the fire, cooking our "rations!" And not until the sun came up did Nan show her old indifference toward me. Then she said that I didn't know how to shoot; and at that I hung my head, for I felt that, being so near, I ought to have winged one at least. After breakfast old Champ said that he would go with the professor over to Scoville, and I whined that I ought to go, too; but they appeased me by declaring that I must remain at home to protect the women and children.

With derringers in my black cloth belt, I walked up and down the road. News of the attempted whipping had begun to spread, and in dignity I stood stiff to answer questions asked by a neighbor. One man charged me with defending a black abolitionist; and with pistol at full cock, I ordered him to move on, which he did with a pace that was not slow. Nan came out to tell me that dinner was ready. On her lip was a snarl, like a bit of red ribbon twisted. Ah, whither had flown her moon-lighted loveliness? The day had grown gray with the premature age of mist, the air was damp, and about the girl's fore-

head hung many an impudent kink of hair.

"How can you be so mean?" I asked. And she replied, "Mean! I haven't said a word."

"But your looks curse me."

"What do they say?"

"Call me a damned fool."

"Ain't you?"

At that moment I wished that the marauders might gallop up and fire a volley in our faces. And if I were wounded nigh unto death and she my nurse to sit beside me in the dark night. the soft wind stirring the candle flame, the dreaded moment coming on with its summons from eternity—to muse upon it were a happiness, surely a reproach to her for cruelty, and therefore sweet to me.

At the head of the table I proudly took my seat, growing every second; and when my plate was helped first, I fain would put my hand upon my head to keep from shooting upward like Jack's bean stalk. With no sign of that patronage which the poor boy constantly looks for in the dread of being humbled, Mrs. Emory was kind and gracefully attentive to me. She was proud, she said,

that her home was the home of a hero; and I was afraid to look at Nan, for I heard a cool rippling that sounded like her laughter in derision.

After dinner I resumed the walking of my beat and kept at it until the professor returned. He stood waiting while I took off his saddle at the yard gate, and when I asked what had become of old Champ, he replied, "I don't understand him. We were coming along, he walking and keeping up with me. I noticed from time to time that his gait was wonderfully easy for an old man, and that his eye, when he looked up at me, was bright. He was telling me of his contentment, living in his shaded cabin all alone, when suddenly his gait changed to a sort of lockstep, and, sniffing the air, he turned off into the bushes and without a word left me. I don't understand him."

I did, but I said nothing. The professor wanted no dinner, having, while in town, feasted on the countryman's delight, sardines and crackers; and sitting in his rocking chair with his pipe, he told us of his visit to the authorities. First, he found it necessary to

convince the sheriff that he was not an abolitionist. This was not easy, as it was known that, in company with a young schoolteacher named James G. Blaine, he had come from the North; but he proved by old Champ that he was not opposed to slavery, and that he owned no negroes simply because he was not able. Lou Biddle, the town marshal, asked him many pointed questions concerning the escape of the three negroes; and one shrewd fellow, who appeared to be a lawyer, wanted to know whether it was true as reported that he kept up a correspondence with Preacher Hoover.

"And," said the professor, "if it is sometimes necessary for a man to evade the truth in order to be a gentleman, as it has often been declared, it is surely essential at times to avoid the truth for the sake of self-protection. I made to them a speech which surely they must remember. Knowing their fondness for oratorical flourish, I heaped 'dictionary' words upon them, with a telling figure thrown in from time to time by old Champ, and I am persuaded that we are now safe from further molestation."

"If you don't believe so," his wife spoke up, "I think we ought to move over into Ohio."

Nan objected. She knew nothing about Ohio, but she had heard that in that State a negress was regarded with more favor than a white woman. She declared that if the negroes were slaves in the South, it was because God had made them such; and turning his eyes upon her, the professor looked at her a long time.

"You don't know what you are talking about," said he, and Mrs. Emory slowly shook her head. But Nan was not so easily to be silenced. "If God didn't want 'em to be slaves, He would set 'em free," she said; and the professor threw down his pipe, got out of his chair and, with a gesture that looked like a thrust of a sword, declared:

"And He *will* set them free—in His own good time, and it will soon be here." He sat down, but did not take up his pipe—he sat and mused and then, looking up suddenly, he said: "And by the way, Turk, I did you a good turn to-day. I met a man who is soon to start for New Orleans with a drove of

mules. He was in need of one other helper and I recommended you. The winter is coming on and we shall have no particular need of you here. It will give you a chance to see a quaint old city and, besides, will pay you well. He will be over to see you to-morrow morning. What do you think of it?"

I looked at Nan. She was holding a kitten in her lap, stroking its ears, but she did not look at me. Had she heard her father's words?

"What do you think of it?" he repeated.

"It's all right," I answered. "I'd like to go."

"You'd be a goose if you didn't," said Nan, stroking the kitten. "I wish I had such a chance."

When Mrs. Emory remarked that the distance was great and the way not without danger, Nan laughed out that surely now I must go, as danger was my chief pleasure. After this I would have gone, had the road led through a swamp of snakes and a thicket of wild cats. So that night my effects were put into a faded carpet-bag, which did not seem any heavier for the "packing"; and when all of them had gone to bed, I took the bag

up to my garret, and in it I tenderly placed a book and a bit of candle. Ah, it had been a long time since kindly hands had brought another book and a new candle. Little Amy, the good—and now she had forgotten me, away at school, and in love with a professor who had lamps and a library.

CHAPTER XVII

SEEING THE WORLD

EARLY on the following morning a man came riding one horse and leading another. He had not the time to dismount, he said; his drove of mules was on the county road, about a mile away, and we must be off at once. He looked around, over my head, as if trying to seek out his new assistant; and when the professor introduced me, there fell upon the drover a dark look of disappointment.

"You don't mean," said he, "that this is the boy that defended your house?"

"This is the boy; and when needs be, he is as full of fight as a gamecock."

"Do you think you can climb on this horse?" the man inquired of me; and I threw my carpet-bag on the ground and told him that I'd see him roasting rather than join his party; but he laughed with broad good nature and told me to mount.

I shook hands with Mrs. Emory, with the professor, and turned to find Nan; but off in a distant part of the yard she was playing with as worthless a dog as ever sneaked under the house whenever there was danger. I called to her. She answered, "Good-bye," and continued to play with the dog.

And so I left them, riding a big sorrel horse, with my carpet-bag hooked over the horn of the saddle. My new master, Captain Starks, offered me a cigar and told me that we should have a famous trip, with the prospect of shooting a few highwaymen. This brightened me; but I complained about the carpet-bag, when he laughed and said, "Why, you didn't expect that you'd have to carry it that way, did you? As soon as we catch up, we'll throw it into the wagon, and then you'll be a sure-enough cavalryman. I reckon the professor man thought he had work to persuade me to take you; but as soon as I heard you were one of the old feud Griffins, I was willing enough. And when I pretended to be disappointed at your size, I was doing it just for fun. I wanted to get a glimpse of your mettle."

Our charge consisted of about six hundred head of mules and a force of fourteen men—a goodly company of horse, and needed, too, for depredations were frequent. Not long before our trip a mule-drover and his guard of several men had been set upon by robbers, two of them shot, and all of the mules driven off. But we were better prepared; and on the first night of camping out, I could hardly sleep for the pistol that lay on the blanket beside me—the first revolver I had ever seen, blue-bright and catching the rays of the moon, reminding me of Nan's eyes when, brimming over with light, they looked up at me in the dark shadow of the fence. Of course I had never been out of Kentucky, and I began to feel like a foreigner when we crossed the Tennessee line. Still there was no suggestion of adventure. I spoke to Captain Starks about it, and he told me to wait until we were well down into the pine woods; and I waited impatiently, as if adventure were the sole object of the expedition. Down among the murmur-gossiping pines we went; and now for days at a time we saw no house, but our camp at night was as quiet as an ordinary

barnyard. At last we came upon the great cotton plantations and thence into the sugar-cane country where "Nellie Gray toiled her life away," and we saw many a white man who might have been the one to take her thither, bound with his chain; but what worried me was that no one tried to steal our mules. Among the men my disappointment became a joke, and they called me the hornet.

One old fellow named Trigg remarked that before I was much older, the land would hear shooting enough and see blood till its eyes were red with weeping; and this reminds me that, whenever we halted in a public place, there was going on a grave discussion. Old men were advising caution, but the younger ones were using a word that I had never heard before "secession"; and when I asked the Captain what it meant, he shook his head and sagely remarked, "It may mean hell breaking loose to beat tan bark." In this there was no enlightenment, but I pretended that there was; and that night I lay with my pistol cocked, waiting for the first stroke upon the tan bark.

Now we were in the neighborhood of New

Orleans; and, no matter how game a countryman may be, he approaches a great city with fear and caution. At school a boy had told me of his trip to Cincinnati; that some evil men sewed him in a sack and were about to toss him into the river, when the mayor came and drove them away; but he had to give the mayor all the money he had, such being the established fee for deliverance. Now I wished that my two old enemies of the woods might come along with their sack or with switches to give me another whipping; and there was a chance that I might encounter them, too; for had not Riddleberry Buck told me that they were engaged in transporting salt down the river?

It was evening when we entered the city, and I never afterwards felt so much afraid under the fire of war as I was in that dazzle of light. When the mules had been turned into a great wagon-yard, we went to a monster hotel where more than a hundred people were eating supper in a room so bright that it hurt my eyes. After supper, in company with several of our men, I walked about the town, keeping a sharp lookout for the man with the

sack. We went to a theater, and there I was in heaven; for a villain that needed killing, if ever one did, was stabbed by a woman whom he had betrayed. I yelled in my wild approval, and a man with a star breastpin came and told me that if I didn't behave myself he would put me out. I bristled up and told him to bring on his sack and try to sew me up in it. Every one within hearing laughed, and I felt that I was a wit.

After the show some of our men began to drink, and thirst came scorching hot upon me; but I fought it off; and when we returned to the hotel, I was so thankful for my strength that I should have prayed in my room, and didn't only because I wasn't acquainted with the customs of the town. The next morning the Captain discharged us, giving to me more money than I had ever seen before, twenty-three dollars and a half; and I was about to tell him that he might keep it if he would give me the pistol, when he remarked, "Turk, on your way home, I'm sure the robbers will get after you, so you'd better keep that revolver."

"Do you mean that I may have it?" I queried, and he nodded.

"That's what I mean," said he, and an ocular gauze dropped between him and me. But, afraid that he might change his mind, I sneaked away and did not tell him good-bye.

It was my duty to go home. No return arrangements had been agreed upon; for we had been hired to go to New Orleans, but not to come back; and as I had no horse, I went down to the river to request the privilege of working my passage on a steamboat. On the way to the wharf, I met a man who told me that he was hungry. He said that he had arrived in town with plenty of money but that he had been robbed; and my sympathy went out to him. But not long afterward, when I told some one that I had been robbed, there was no sympathy for me. I was laughed at, and I sneaked away. My money was gone, but I had my pistol and was still thankful. I can't recall how that fellow got my money. I think he asked me to let him count it; and when I handed it over, he dodged down an alley and was gone.

Along the wharf there were a great array of steamboats with their noses stuck together into the bank, like hogs feeding; but nobody

had time to talk to me, and more than once I came near being knocked into the river. Finally a man said that if I would help roll on hogsheads of sugar, he would take me as far as Memphis, the end of his voyage; and I thought him exceptionally kind. But the next moment he swore at me and commanded me to take hold. Cursed me! I whipped about and was in for a fight, when an Irishman ran up and told me not to take it to heart, that the man was the mate and always talked like that.

"Why," said he, "I hearrud him say to the wife of him, 'Dairlant, ye damn fool, come to dinner.'" This eased my anger, and I went to work.

The Irishman was a good fellow. He made it as light for me as he could; and at night, when we slept on the deck, he shared his blanket with me. But my work did not continue long. On the morning of the second day I was seized with a fever; and upon reaching Memphis, they had to carry me ashore. In the shade of a shed they placed me, and the Irishman went away. After a time there came two women with sweet faces,

sisters of charity, and they took me to a hospital, where I remained for nearly four months.

When I was able to get about, they got me some light work to do. I told one of the sisters that I would work until I got enough money to pay them, no matter if it took ten years; but she smiled and said that I owed nothing, nor would she hear of taking a cent from me. More than a dozen times did I try to write to the professor; but, always afraid that Nan might see the letter and laugh at it, I gave up all attempt. Once I thought of selling my pistol for enough money to take me home, but shook off the prompting, not as a temptation but as a chill. In town there was no work for which I was fitted, and I went into the country and hired out to a planter. He was kind to me, but the overseer looked upon me as if I were a negro, and quietly I waited for a reasonable excuse to teach him better. He must have seen something in my jaundiced eye, for he never gave me sufficient cause to kill him.

During seven months I worked from dawn till dark, and finally, with new clothes and the

first pair of thin shoes I had ever owned, I got on my first railway train. To whiz across the country in the direction of home was a delight, but what was waiting for me? Nothing but hard work and low wages. Still, it was home, and I was not yet free from the legal bonds that held me. I had been gone more than a year. And it must be that sometimes a fever causes a boy to grow, for the one pair of trousers brought from home was now too short, and of this I was rather proud. I felt that Nan must notice my added height, and I didn't know but that her father might increase my wages. In the fact that I had seen the city and had traveled on a great steamboat I took pride, and surely the girl could not laugh at my adventures, particularly when I should tell her that I had been robbed, and that two ladies with sweet faces had taken me to a hospital more than twice as big as our barn.

The train took me to Louisville, where there was another dazzle of lights, but I had now grown world-wise and was not astonished at them. An old man grinding a thing that groaned out a sort of tune held a cup out at

me, and I told him that I could count my own money, what little I had; but he called on God to bless me, and I gave him ten cents. Another railroad ran out of Louisville, somewhat in the direction of Scoville, but missing that town by about fifteen miles, so I decided to go as far as possible and then walk. They put me off at a station in the woods where there was a great array of tan bark stacked up, and I thought of Captain Starks and wondered what had become of him. My way now lay through the woods, off to the left, toward Scoville, and with a stick thrust through the "ears" of my carpet-bag I set out. A killing frost had fallen, and slowly the leaves were fluttering down through the mellow air. The glitter of spring and the dazzling shine of summer had departed from the streams, leaving them a luminous amber; and the wild grape was ripe on the vine where the yellow-hammer fluttered. Along the top rail of a fence the gray squirrel ran so swiftly that his tail seemed a long streak of fringe; and down from the billowless ocean of blue came the caw of the crow.

My course lay through Scoville; but in the

town I did not intend to halt, for the nearer I drew the more anxious I was to reach home. Out of a hundred recollections came little thrills, emotion pictures of times gone by; and many a look and many a tone of voice came out of that short past which then had seemed so long.

There had been a day when to me Scoville was a wilderness of urban mysteries. The buildings were palatial, and the streets were endless; but now, since my travels, the town was but a blotch upon a gullied hillside. But as hunger had for several hours kept company with me, I entered a tumble-down shanty, above whose door "Snack House" was written, and sitting down at the end of a long table asked for something to eat, when a voice cried out, "Hello, you!" and up came Nick Bowles, wearing among other flashes of fashion a red necktie adorned with a lump of glass. Before I could get upon my feet, he took my hand and swaggered over me, and I felt that he must have advanced in the world's favor.

"Keep your seat," he said and, turning to the negro waiter, commanded him to bring

forth the best he had, which I soon found out was also the worst. "Make yourself at home here," said Nick; and having railed at the negro, turned to me again with, "I don't reckon you've been back long enough to hear about my good luck."

I swaggered becomingly and replied that I was just returning from my travels. At the word "travels" he sniffed somewhat loftily and remarked that a man could very often do better by not going away from home.

"You spoke of your luck," said I, "what are you doing?"

"What am I doing? Ask any man in town. Why, I'm bartender over at the Gem Saloon. For a while after comin' here I worked at a livery stable, but after a month or so I got the job of scrubbin' around the Gem; and when the bartender got killed, I took his place while the boss was hidin' out from the grand jury, and when he come back, he put me on regular. Git through with your dinner and come over and see."

"I'd rather go into a den of rattlesnakes," I replied.

Smiling at me, he said, "Sho' 'nuff? Well,

that's where you and me are different. I've got so I can take just so many drinks a day and not git too much. You could git that way, too, if you'd try. By the way, I drove by the professor's last Sunday, and I would have stopped, but there didn't appear to be nobody at home. But Sam Hawkins was out there not long ago, and he tells me that Nan is as putty as a peach; but he 'lowed she was high-headeder than a blooded colt in a pasture."

I pretended to pay no attention, and after a time I asked him if he ever heard from Preacher Hoover.

"Yes, sir, got a letter from him not long ago with a couple of twenty-dollar notes in it. I reckon he's makin' money up there a lecturin' to the Yankees. Well, I'm up in the world and don't need his money, still it will take him a good while at that rate to pay for my daddy, and I'll pocket all the money he's a mind to send. Say, if you are goin' out to the professor's, I'll hitch up and drive you. It's election day in town, and our saloon is closed up."

I was tired, the hinges of my knees seemed rusty, and my feet were heavy; but I told him

that I preferred to walk. He argued with me; but I was firm, and shouldering my carpet-bag, I hastened away, fearing that he and my own weariness might tempt me to drive with him.

Coming upon the professor's land along toward evening, I saw that the fields had been laid off about as they were the year before—corn in the same place and tobacco on the upland, where I had toiled so hard. As I approached the barn, there was a great cackling of hens, and then my heart beat high, for out came a figure in a long dress, with apron gathered up in front. It was Nan.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MAN IN THE HIGH RIG

HERE she stood, radiant in the rays of the sinking sun; and as now I look back upon her, she seems ever to have been in the sun or the moon. She did not see me until I spoke, within a few feet of her, when she turned about, and with no sign of surprise said, "I've got thirteen eggs."

"One for each month I was away," I replied, and with her old laugh she said, "No, they ain't crow eggs."

I offered my hand, but she gathered up the eggs as if she did not see me; and together we walked along toward the house, not nearly so well acquainted as we had been—almost strangers, it seemed to me. I spoke of her long dress, and she said it was time to put it on, as she had "set out," and that ever so many young men were coming to see her.

"Don't you think I've grown a good deal since I left?"

She looked at me. "Who, you? Why, you couldn't grow. You are too little." But I saw that she did to herself acknowledge that I had grown, for she surveyed me from head to foot. "And my, such new clothes!" she said. "You look almost like a gentleman. No, I won't go that far, but you do look a heap better than you did. Oh, and before we get to the house, let me tell you something. Amy is at home and ain't going back to school again, for she is engaged to one of the professors; and he wrote to father, and father wrote to him and called him all sorts of names and said he'd shoot him if he ever came here; and yesterday Amy got a letter from him, and he said he was coming no matter if they shot him full of lead. Ain't he brave? Don't you wish you were that brave? Ha, don't you? Of course you do. And in the night mother cries and comes and kneels down at our bed and puts her arms around Amy, and then they both cry. Ain't that lovely? Why, you know Amy is old enough to get married. She is eighteen, and that means she will soon be an old maid, and wouldn't that be terrible? I don't want to be the sister of an old maid.

Would you? But, of course, with you it would be different, for if you had any sisters all of them would be old maids, wouldn't they? I told Amy she ought to run away; and I wish she would. It would be such fun to see her climbing out of the window and to hear her professor sighing out in the dark. Amy says he sighs all the time, and she is afraid he will die; but I don't think he will. Father said he was an infamous scoundrel; and then he and mother had a quarrel, and mother cried. I never saw so much crying in my life. I told mother we must be going to have a dry season because this one was so wet, and she threatened to box my ears. Oh, we've had such a time."

The professor was standing at the gate, evidently watching for Amy's lover; and when, with a loud call, he greeted me, Mrs. Emory came out and, seeing me, ran and put her arms about me. The professor grabbed me by the hand and said that I had come back in good time, that he might have need of my moon-light vigils and my gunpowder; and then out came Amy with her face pale and her eyes red, for she must have had a fresh

spell of weeping. She didn't say anything as she took my hand, but her lips moved, and then she turned away and hid her eyes.

In a few words I told the professor why I had remained away so long; and when he asked why I had not written, I told him the truth, though Nan stood there. At the supper table I entertained them with my adventures; and when I came to the sisters of charity, Amy cried out that she was going to be a nun. Mrs. Emory's tears began to fall, and upon his plate the professor threw down his knife with a loud clang. He got up and walked away, and Mrs. Emory told me that they were all so miserable, and then Amy joined in with her tears. Between the flurries there were calms, during which we talked of things gone and things hoped for, but not long at a time, for some word always fell to bring about another flurry of grief.

Bedtime promised to come in a calm, and with a sense of gratitude in my heart, I slipped out and made a cross mark on the door of the smokehouse. Shortly afterward the girls went out to look for a hen that had led her

late brood away from the fold of safety. They found her in a corner of the fence where soon, no doubt, she would have been prey for a prowling fox—in the very corner where one night Nan and I had stood, waiting not for foxes, but for wolves that came howling through the woods. It was a long time since a fresh mark had been made on that door, but when I went up to my garret room, there on my box lay a book and a new candle. In my heart I blessed the poor girl whose soul was now so full of trouble; and early the following morning I began to thank her, but she turned away, and as soft words seemed ever to call for her tears, I no further strove to speak my gratitude.

The day started out well. The season had been good, labor fair, and the crops were large. Tobacco was going up in price, and a drouth in the West had made corn an article of cash value. Mrs. Emory smiled as the professor talked of building a new house. Nan said that they were going to build a church near the grove where Mr. Hoover had preached, a church and schoolhouse combined, almost as big as a college; but at the

word college the professor looked dark, Amy sighed, and then came another flurry.

So shortly returned from so long an absence, it was not expected that I should go to work at once, so stealing off I went over to visit my old friend Champ Jones.

I found him behind his cabin, skinning a mink that his trap had snapped up the night before, and he thrust forth his hand and gave me a tight squeeze.

"Well, sir," he said, as if I had been a man six feet high, "we missed you around here. As the world grows older, true worth becomes a scarcer article, I tell you; and when a fellow drops out of sight, it is then we begin to know how much we valued him. Of course, you're not old enough yet to understand this, but the time will come—yes, sir, it will come. Take hold of this gentleman's soft shirt and help me pull it off. That's it. Don't blame him for not wanting to lose his garment; but I don't suppose he would mind pulling off mine if he were able."

I asked him about his political bible, the *New York Tribune*, and knowingly he shook his grizzled head. "Well, sir, it is bringing

things to a focus. You've heard of George D. Prentice, haven't you?"

"Yes, I heard some men away down South talk about him."

"Well, you know he came to Kentucky to write the life of Henry Clay; and as editor of the *Louisville Journal* I think he would advocate abolition if he dared, but it would mean the mobbing of his office. Of course he pretends to shoot at Greeley once in a while, but he usually ends up with some hidden compliment. Lord a mercy, though, how he does harpoon old Brownlow! Let me wash my hands, and we'll go in and sit down. Take that gourd and pour me some water."

When we went into the house, he showed me the biggest double-barrel shotgun I ever saw. It was a duck gun, to be used in a boat, and would chamber ten buck-shot at least. "And you'll notice several holes around in the wall where I can thrust it out. Our community hasn't improved morally since you left, and one of these nights the prowlers may come after me—that is, if they like."

While we were talking, a rig with high wheels stopped in the road, and a man called

out to us. We went forth, and a youngish-looking fellow asked if we would give him a drink of water. Hereupon old Champ, remarking that the water in the pail was not fresh, poured it on the ground and set out for the spring, while the man sat there looking about as if he were in a strange country. I asked him if he were going far, and he smiled agreeably, showing gold in his teeth, and said that he might go further than he wished. I didn't understand such talk as this and told him so, but he smiled again and asked if I knew a certain Professor Emory.

"I live at his house, sir."

"Ah, you don't tell me! And in that event, I presume, you must be acquainted with his daughter."

"He has two daughters, sir," I replied.

"I refer to his daughter—Amy." He hesitated, as if the name were sacred to him, and I knew that her professor was before me. "Have you heard any talk derogatory to my interest—since a certain letter, which indeed you may not know was written, but which, I assure you, was written and that, too, in most threatening terms. Have you?"

"I have heard a good deal of talk, sir, but the girl loves you; and if I were in your place, it wouldn't make any difference to me how much they talked or threatened, I'd go there and carry her off."

"Bless my soul! Young man, give me your hand. Ah, you must be the young man, Turk. I have heard—Amy speak of you."

Old Champ returned with the water and offered a gourd dripping full. The young man drank, made a bow, which I should have liked to copy before Nan, returned the gourd, and inquired if I should like to ride with him. To leave Champ without any explanation would be rude, I thought, so turning to the new professor I said, "This man is a friend of the family. Tell him what you have come for."

"Ah, rather a blunt way to express it, I am sure. However——" Here he looked at Champ. "Go ahead," commanded the old man, and the professor explained that he was in love with Emory's daughter, and that he was going to urge his suit. It was the first time I had heard it put that way—urging a suit—and I laughed; but the collegiate lover

looked grave and said that it was surely not a matter to excite mirth. Then I told him that I was very ignorant and that he must pardon me, which he did with a vigorous shake of my hand. He told us that his name was Kirkpatrick, which struck with favor upon my ear, as the Irishman who had been so kind to me was named Patrick. He asked if we should drive straight up to the house, and I told him yes, as soon as we got back into the main road, from which he had wandered. I got into his high rig, and on we went.

"I can't understand his objections," said the collegian. "My family is, I am sure, as good as his, and besides he has never seen me. Ah, can you not devise some method of approach other than driving up to the gate?" Then came to me an idea that I fancied might work well.

"Let me get out and go in advance and sit about as if nothing was going to happen. In the meantime I'll tell Miss Amy that you are coming, and at the proper time you drive up and ask to stay all night. You can give any sort of name you please, and the next day you needn't be in a hurry to get off. You can

soon find out what the professor likes to talk about. It wouldn't be bad if you hinted something about abolition."

"Young man, you are a general. I shall do as you say."

So, when we were within a mile of the professor's house, I got out and cut across a near way. The afternoon was soft, the mellow lagend of Indian summer, and the family sat out beneath the great oak tree. Supposing that I had been over to Champ's, the professor asked how the old man was getting along, and I told him about the duck gun, and he laughed and said that one of these nights was to mark a sad epoch in the history of night prowlers. After a time Amy went into the house to fetch something, and I followed her. When I told her my news she almost fainted, and of course she was frightened at my plan, but agreed to act her part, and shortly afterward, when we were again beneath the tree, she said, "I wonder who that is coming along yonder."

"He's got a shining turn-out," said the professor. "Think I saw that same rig over at Scoville the other day. Hello, he's going to stop."

The professor went out to the gate and soon returned with the stranger, who bowed awkwardly and said that he wanted to stay all night. From a most polished gentleman he had become blunt, but with it all he appeared to be frank; and I knew that he would soon please the professor. He was selling Bibles, he said; at a house not far down the road he had sold the last one, "but, Madam," he added, speaking to Mrs. Emory, "as soon as I return to Cincinnati, I shall have one of our handsomest sent to you."

Mrs. Emory said that he was very kind, she was sure, and Amy asked him if he had any Sunday-school books. He was sorry, but his house printed truth, not fiction; and the professor laughed.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said he. "Of all the trash the world ever saw, the trashiest is the average Sunday-school book. It would be far better if they should stock their libraries with 'Vicars of Wakefield' and 'Tom Joneses.' We had a church to burn down some time ago, sir, and out of it arose one good, the destruction of books that disgraced the printer's art. Perhaps you may

have heard of a preacher named Hoover. He left this community rather hastily, to save his life, he thought, and is now settled in your city."

The visitor had heard of him, "a most eccentric and suddenly-spoken man." "Somewhere," said he, "I read one of his sermons in which he was firm in the old faith of infant condemnation;" and then I knew that the sentiment of Mrs. Emory's letters to her daughter had found lodgment in him.

"Ah, I hope," spoke the good woman, "that you did not subscribe to those heartless views."

"Far be it from me," replied the visitor. Then he begged pardon for not having introduced himself. His name was Kirk, he said; upon which the professor shook hands with him, while Mrs. Emory bowed and said that he was welcome at her house.

I was sent to back the high rig under the shed and to put up the horses, and when I returned, Mr. Kirk and the family were on the easiest of terms. Abolition was just about slyly to creep into their talk; when, looking about as if afraid of evil ears, Mr. Kirk

remarked that the devil's chosen children were appointed to sell the humble flesh and blood of the Lord's down-trodden, which caused the professor to beam upon him.

"Let me show you my farm," said he, and together they walked away; and Mrs. Emory, looking after them as they crossed the road into the field, remarked upon her pleasure at seeing her husband again interested in the general affairs of life.

We all of us were soon astir to prepare the best supper possible, Mrs. Emory remarking that it was always agreeable to have visitors from the intelligent world. And she added that she thought Mr. Kirk an exceedingly handsome man. Amy had not taken particular notice of his looks, but she thought that his voice was musical; and looking out I saw shrewd Nan, standing half-hidden behind a tree, laughing. When I moved towards her, she threw a piece of bark in my face and ran away, all of a giggle, her unaccustomed long skirt tangling about her ankles.

I followed, calling on her to stop, which she did at the door of the carpenter shop; and there I made a confidante of her. She moved

back inside the shop, tossed up a handful of shavings, ran under the shower, and with the blond curls of poplar clinging to her black ringlets, she ran out, declaring that she was going to tell. I followed her to the dining-room, but upon entering I found her as sober as a matron. After a time she made a sign to Amy, they went out, and I saw them hugging each other in the yard.

We sat up late that night, and when the old clock struck one, the professor said to Mr. Kirk, "You are not going to leave us to-morrow, sir. It is with truth that I say that not for more than a year have I been so entertained. You say that you are to await orders sent from your house to Scoville. Be our guest until that time."

"It may be more than a week," Mr. Kirk replied, and the professor heartily rejoined, "And suppose, sir, that it should be two weeks? You are welcome here."

Thus it was agreed that Mr. Kirk should be our guest as long as he could possibly remain; and while I was prowling about in the dark I passed the hen-house, where, by the light of the lantern, the professor and his wife were seeing

that the chickens were safely housed, and there I heard them talking.

"He may be only a book-agent now," said the professor, "but the time is coming when we shall hear more of him;" and in my mind I entered no dispute. "And see with what indifference our daughters regard him," the professor went on. "But it is always the way, a woman's eye is blind to real worth."

"I discovered your worth, Walter. There is one chicken of this brood missing. No, here it is."

"Women were different then, my dear."

The next morning Amy wanted to visit a friend in Scoville, and Mr. Kirk kindly offered to drive her thither in his high rig. When they drove off, Nan ran into the carpenter shop again. They did not return until late in the afternoon, and then they appeared to be a little better acquainted. Kirk got me off to one side and offered me money, but a moment later he apologized. He was but half-way out of his difficulty, he said; the professor must surely resent the deception. When I told him to marry Amy and then make himself known, he shook his head and declared that

such a course would never do. On the following night he took Amy to a revival meeting away over at Mt. Zion, and the professor and his wife were pleased. It was now evident that she was growing fond of Mr. Kirk, and I fancied that I heard Mrs. Emory murmur her surprise at her daughter's fickleness, for which she had cause, as not since the coming of Mr. Kirk had there been any tears. And it was not a fancy, but a fact, that I heard the professor say, "Let her alone. She surely ought to know her own mind."

I had not been set to any regular employment. In truth, there was not much work to be done at this season of the year, but with hauling wood for cold weather and practicing with my revolver, I was not likely to lose my sense of industry. And then there was my circulating library. Since Amy's return it had been well supplied, and though now the professor would have forced no objection to my reading, yet to steal the time by the light of a candle was sweeter, and so I kept up the practice.

One night I went over to old Champ's to look at his duck gun again. I told him of

Kirk's progress, at which the old man laughed till he had to lean far over to get the ache out of his side, and so pleased was he at the confidence I had placed in him that he offered to let me fire his gun. So, thrusting the monstrous thing through one of the holes cut for its use, I fired it into the woods; and as old Champ was helping me off the floor where I had been sprawled, he asked me how I liked it. I remember to have growled that, if both ends were equal, he could put himself and his enemies out of the way at the same time.

It was late when I returned home, but the professor and Mr. Kirk were up, talking on subjects that I did not understand. Once in a while they would dispute, and then I would fear that their agreeable ties were broken; but afterward I discovered that this was the way with schoolmen who had theories to uphold. They talked about books, and I wondered why some of these had lived so long, being so worthless; but I was pleased when they agreed that a certain book which had just come out was an immortal piece of work. The fact that it died many years ago,

and that its author is now unknown, makes no difference; I was glad then to know that it was immortal.

This was on a Saturday; and just after a spat more threatening than any that had gone before, the two men agreed that they would go to church next day at Scoville, where a great preacher from the South was to prove to the satisfaction of slave-owners that slavery was ordained by the Lord. It was settled that Mr. Kirk and Amy were to drive in the high rig and that the rest of us should go in the barouche; and this arrangement was to my liking, for the professor, still having a poor opinion of my driving, would sit in front with his wife, leaving the rear seat to Nan and me. We were to take luncheon with us, to be eaten at a spring, coming back; and by daylight the next morning the women folk were busy frying chicken. Just as the sun was coming up, Nan caught me shaving myself in the carpenter shop.

"Oh," she said, "you think you're a man, now, don't you?"

"I'm as much of a man as you are of a woman."

"You might study a year and you couldn't say a more foolish thing than that."

"The longer I study when you are around, the more foolish I become."

"Do I take all the sense out of you, goose?"

"Yes. You make me feel ignorant."

"Oh," she broke out anew, "you have shaved some of the freckles off your face. Don't you wish you could get 'em all off?"

"I'd skin my face if it would please you."

"Oh, you would? Well, I don't want you to please me. I don't like it. I like you best, somehow, when you make me mad."

"You look prettier when you're mad."

"Do I?" She made a mouth at me.

The professor called us. At the table he asked a long blessing and then told me to hurry up and harness the horses. Ah, how fondly did I look forward to that trip! Thinking that I might meet Nick, I planned to humiliate him by showing my repeating pistol, which I had forgotten to do when I met him in the Snack House; and each buckle I fastened was an added pleasure. The horses were pranky, not having had much work to do, and as I started off toward the gate, one

of them jumped, the other capered, and thus they struck one of the wheels squarely against a stump, breaking out at least half of the spokes. The professor saw the accident—knew that it was not my fault; but he came roaring forth oaths, which he took back as soon as he had uttered them, calling on the Lord to forgive him. To mend the wheel in time was impossible, and yet it was necessary that the professor should hear that sermon. He scratched his head, and then up came Mr. Kirk.

"Four can go in my rig," said he. "Perhaps Turk and Miss Nan might not object to remaining at home."

They all were now at the gate and overheard Mr. Kirk's suggestion. I looked at Nan to see how she would take it, expecting that she would frown upon it, but she did not; she surprised me with a smile and a nod, and said that as for herself she didn't care to go.

To me this was of such encouragement that I was glad that the wheel had broken—to be alone all day with her; but I was afraid to show the rising temper of my hope lest she

might blast it. The high rig drove away, Amy and Mr. Kirk on the front seat, and alone with Nan I stood in the yard.

"What makes you look so foolish?" she asked, laughing at me; and I did feel foolish, for now that we had been left to ourselves, there seemed nothing to do but to stare at each other. I was more embarrassed than if I had met her for the first time, nor was she so free as was her wont. I waited for her to speak again, but she stood in silence, looking down the road. After a time she went into the house; and soon I followed her with an armful of wood, for, though the sun was well up in the cloudless sky, the air was cool. She cautioned me to let the wood down easily so as not to jar the plastering off the wall, and she scolded me for littering the new rag carpet. I got a book and thought that I was reading, but she asked me to stop staring at her. I told her that, if she would select some spot where without offense I might bestow my gaze, I would do so; at which she laughed and said, "Look down and be humble."

"That is something I can't be," I replied.

"Ah, and that's the trouble with you," she

said. "You are as poor as a beggar, but as proud as a prince. But I don't know that I like you any the less for that. Tell me about your people—the way they used to fight." And I gave her as nearly as I could the history of my unfortunate family, which was all war with never a day of real peace; and as she sat looking at me, her eyes grew soft. But it was not in my mind to tell her that I loved her; never had I acknowledged it to myself, though I found myself often swearing that I hated her. At any rate, had I loved her ever so much, my words were too blunt to carry a tender message.

I sat in silence musing upon this, when there came a thumping at the open door. Nan jumped up, seized the broom, swept the hearth and called out, "Come in." By this time I had seen a young fellow at the door. He came in, and Nan introduced me to Mr. Bloodgood, as "ornery" a looking lout as I have ever seen. Of course I was shot through with the pangs of jealousy, for I had expected a whole day with Nan when we might quarrel as long as we chose. In spite of his fairly good clothes, this fellow looked com-

mon. He did not appear game, and to me that was offense. Nan was very polite toward him; she took his hat and hung it up, she opened the window blind so that the sunlight fell upon his mottled countenance, she honeyed him with a smile; and I looked at the fire shovel, musing how easy it would be to brain him with it. Nan asked him if his mother were well, and he drawled out, "Yes, but granny's sorter on the lift."

So this was one of the many young men who Nan said were coming to see her, and I said to myself that, if he were a sample, the Lord in His boundless and mysterious mercy must surely have pity on the rest.

Mr. Bloodgood had not long been our guest when I saw that he had crowded his feet into boots much too small for him, and that he was suffering. To me this was a delightful discovery, and I brought more wood to feed the fire so that the heat would draw the leather. Nan did not detect my trickery, for she praised me with her eyes and then gave ear to the senseless mutterings of her visitor. Pretty soon the boots began to draw, and he sat with one foot on the other and with a dry

grin on his face. Occasionally I ducked out to laugh and to bring more fuel; and when he began to look as if some ill-smelling tincture were held under his nose, I had to dart out of the house, stumbling and almost falling at the door. When I came back, the sweat was standing on his brow, and his grin had broadened. He said something about going home, but Nan jumped up, declaring that he must eat dinner with us, and away she went to the kitchen to make the coffee. When she was well out of the way, I addressed myself to Bloodgood.

"Your boots appear to be hurting you."

"Jest about killin' me."

"I had a pair not long ago that almost took my life. It was while I was in New Orleans, and I don't know how much more I should have suffered, but up came a French doctor and gave me something to pour in the boots. I did so, and they never hurt me at all from that moment. I brought some of the stuff home with me, and I'll let you have it if you say so."

I think he tried to look grateful when he begged me to bring the lotion. I went out

and soon returned with some muddy water in a vial. It was necessary to take off his boots, I told him; and when I helped him, it seemed that the skin must come off with them.

"Ah, this feels good," he said, letting his feet spread out on the floor. "I don't reckon there's nothin' in the world hurts much worse nor a tight boot. They are plenty high enough, you see—only they ain't quite high enough in the instep."

I told him that I knew exactly how it was, and I did; and then he poured the water into his boots, taking care that there should be an equal division. He was loth to put them on again, dreading his punishment, but I assured him that it was all right, and it was—with me. After a while Nan called us to dinner, and he grabbed his boots, but his feet had swollen so that he couldn't get them much more than half on. He tugged, and I pretended to lend a hand; but finally he looked up with despair in his countenance and said that it was of no use. He heard Nan coming, and snatching up his boots he fled, taking the nearest cut for the woods; and when she came in and asked what had become of Mr. Bloodgood, I was so

nearly choked that I couldn't tell her. Finally I got it out, and she started to scold, but was seized with laughter and ran out to the dining-room, where I heard such music of laughter as I may never hear again in this world.

At no time during the afternoon did we get back to Nan's tender-eyed state; and by the time the professor and party returned from church, we were far apart, having had a quarrel; for when she had got out of the boot incident all the fun there was in it for her, she accused me of misusing her company.

The professor and Mr. Kirk were still hot from the insult of such a sermon. The great man had said that slavery was not only ordained by the Lord, but that He guarded it with as much zeal as if it were His own acknowledged church. The slave owners applauded right out in meeting; and when services were over, nearly everybody crowded about the preacher to shake hands with him.

"It does not appear," said Mr. Kirk, "that our shipment of Bibles into this part of the country does much good," and the professor replied, "The trouble is that the Bible is not strong enough on that point. Not one of its

writers pronounces against slavery in a manner that cannot be gainsaid, and our people go so far as actually to find sacred authority for owning slaves. There is no use of further talk, of attempted moral suasion. The Bible and the pulpit have failed. There is only one other agency."

"Ah, you mean the sword," said Mr. Kirk.

"I have not said, but there is only one other agency."

Mr. Kirk took out a letter, which he said that the postmaster had given to him; and after reading it, remarked that as his house was considering the advisability of sending him to a new territory, it was thought best that he should wait at Scoville during at least another week, until final arrangements could be made. "But I shall not impose upon your kindness," said he. "I may just as well board in town."

"If you can put up with our fare," replied the professor, "you shall remain here. Perhaps, sir, you are not aware of the fact that we live here almost in an intellectual desert. You come from the world, and we like your news."

And so it was settled that Mr. Kirk should remain at least one week longer than had been intended; and late that night I saw him steal a kiss from Amy; I saw her face rosy with happiness and I was not sorry for the part I was playing.

CHAPTER XIX

A CONTRACT

ON THE following morning, just as we were sitting down to breakfast, there came on horseback a boy with a note from Captain Starks, and from it I spelled out that he wished to see me over at Scoville. I had not heard of him since we parted in New Orleans, and still holding him close to my heart, as he had given me a revolver, I was not long in making preparations for the journey, deciding to make it afoot. But the kindly Mr. Kirk came forward and said that it would give him pleasure to drive me to the town. This was making me important indeed, and I cut my eye at Nan, but she did not notice me. In the cool air I should have found pleasure in walking, but I saw that Mr. Kirk had in mind something for my ear, so I thanked him and went out to harness the horses. The professor asked Amy if she did not wish to go with us, but she said that she had a piece of work to

do, and I understood then that Mr. Kirk had made her acquainted with his intention, whatever it might be. As we drove off, the professor shouted his wish that we might soon return, and then looking back, I saw him making gestures to Amy and was sure that he was urging her to observe some newly-found trait in the character and bearing of his friend. It was some time before Mr. Kirk spoke, and not at all until he had turned and looked back more than once to satisfy himself that it was safe to speak; and when he was sure that he was running no risk from some vagrant air current that might waft back his words, he said:

"Well, Turk, have you any advice to offer?"

I told him that I had not, except that it was time to declare himself to the professor; and he laughed, but not with the boldness that I thought should be accompaniment to such a determination, and said that the time was surely ripe. "But the fact is, I hardly know how to approach him. I find myself in a most delicate situation. What would you do, or rather, I might say, in what manner would you go about it?"

"I'd say that I had played off on him and wanted to marry his daughter and that, if he didn't give his consent, would do it anyhow."

"Too brusque, I assure you. Have you nothing else to offer?"

Surely no one is so wanting in sentimental wisdom as a rustic whose first experience of the world was behind a drove of mules; but I have never found mortal who was not capable of giving advice to a lover. And so, proud of my office, I thought for a time as seriously as I could and replied that the shortest cut was most likely to prove the best.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, just say, 'Mr. Emory, I love your daughter——' "

"I see. Proceed."

" 'Love your daughter, and she loves me, and I want you to—to let me marry her.' Then he will look a good deal more surprised than he is and tell you that he has no objections. Then you must say, 'Well, I don't know about that.' And by this time he'll be surprised sure enough, and will ask you what you mean. Then it will be the right time to say, 'It was love that caused me to act this

way, in coming to your house with a lie in my throat, but if you'll give me your daughter, I'll work for her and treat her right and love her, and cut the throat of a man that dares to look cross-eyed at her. But I don't sell Bibles. I am a professor and my name is Kirkpatrick. Now what are you going to do about it?'"

Mr. Kirk roared with laughter. He said that he could not employ my words, but that I had given him a good idea. "But suppose," said he, "that all of his former objections should flash upon his mind and that before viewing the matter in a natural and reasonable light, he might see it only by the red glare of his anger and—and in his fury leap upon me. It would be—embarrassing, I assure you."

I told him that I thought it would be. "But if he does that," said I, "the best thing would be to choke him until he agrees not to have any objections."

"Ah," replied Mr. Kirk, "quite an original idea, I assure you. But suppose that, when we return home, you take the professor off some distance and tell him the truth, and perhaps by the time he——"

"Catches you," I suggested.

"Ah, yes, catches me—he may have cooled down to an acknowledgment of what I conceive to be a just claim. How does that idea appeal to you?"

"All right. Leave it to me."

Hereupon the spirits of Mr. Kirk rose high, like a meadow-lark which we saw mounting the air, and he whistled a tune. During the rest of the journey he talked not so much of his love as of his school, and he used words that were music to me; but when I asked him to speak one of them again that I might fasten it in my mind, he said that he should not have used it, as for the most part the short word was more apt. I told him that I had always thought that the big word proved that the speaker was wise; but he shook his head and gave to me this advice: "Whenever you can, use the Anglo-Saxon word." I thanked him and said that I would, and fell to wondering what he meant by Anglo-Saxon, and I would have asked him, but was afraid that he would think me a fool.

As we entered the town, he asked me to eat dinner with him at the hotel, but at that

moment I saw Captain Starks coming across the street. We drew up, and the Captain shook me by the hand and bade me come with him to a place where we might talk; and I got out of the rig after telling Mr. Kirk to wait for me on the public square. But shortly afterward I regretted having followed the Captain, for I saw that he was heading for the Gem Saloon. But drawing back would have looked too squeamish, so I entered with him and there was Nick behind the bar. He gave a hello and with his hot hand shook mine; he put out a tall bottle with a glass marble in a wire net on the end of it and told me to help myself. I replied that I had helped myself one night on a knoll when the eyes of the sky began to pop out, and I backed off from the bar and sat down at a table near the wall. The Captain ordered some sort of a mixed drink and sat down with me, and while Nick was shaking the liquor in a tin thing, there came a shriek, "You're a liar." I jumped up, thinking that there was going to be a fight, but Nick laughed and motioned with his head toward a parrot sitting on a barrel.

"Come and be a good fellow," said Nick as he came forward with the Captain's drink.

"Don't urge him," the Captain spoke up.

Nick poured out straight liquor for himself and sat down. "Well," said he, "how are our gals gittin' along?"

"Do you remember once when I took up a rail from the fence and said I would crack your head with it?" said I, and the Captain gave me a swift look. Nick said that he recalled the time, and then I added, "Well, there are no rails here, but if you speak of—somebody in such a place as this, I'll hit you with the first thing I can get hold of."

"And serve him right," said the Captain, sipping his drink.

Nick laughed. "Oh, he'd do it in a minute. No yallerjacket ain't no readier to sting than him. But how are you gittin' along? But you don't put on no more style than you did." He hooked his thumbs in the armholes of his red "wescut" and looked at me. "Don't reckon you need to ask how it is with me. You can see for yo'se'f. And I want to tell you that a man what works out o' doors is got a heap to learn. I got enough of it; and you could git

enough, too, if you'd take my advice. Why don't you do somethin'? Why don't you brace yo'se'f and be somebody?"

A customer came in, and Nick hastened behind the bar, upon which the Captain said to me, "I'm glad that what he says don't have any weight with you. And before he comes back, I'll tell you what I wanted to see you about. I've got together another drove of mules, and I want you to go along with me as my first lieutenant. On the other occasion you were a private, and this time I'll pay you about twice as much. What do you say?"

What could I say? To be anything that smacked of authority; to feel that I was rising out of the common dust of humble life and might wear black clothes with a white shirt and boots with high heels and a watch with a big chain; to see myself arrayed in a manner to catch and to hold the eye of Nan; to have the professor say to me, "Ah, you are a man, let me show you my farm;" indeed, to be somebody other than a hired boy who at Old Blood had but barely learned to read—the thought of it all made my heart beat fast; and my emotion was not lost on the Captain,

for, without awaiting my answer, he said, "All right, Turk, and I know you will give me good service. Before we get very far South, I'll have to make several trips out from the main command, to gather up more recruits for the drove, and at such times you'll be the captain. The times are shaky, and I've got to get some one I can trust. We are going to outfit here in this town, and I'll see Brooks & Mass, the supply men, and tell them to let you have anything you want. Of course I am ready to take your word for anything, but it is better to have a contract; so if you wait here till I go over to a lawyer's office and have the paper drawn up, you can sign it without more ado."

He went out carelessly for one bent on an errand so great, I thought, and I sat there almost in a daze. To sign a contract! Not in the most free-rein indulgence of ambitious fancy had I ever looked forward to the time when I should be called upon to sign a contract. It was like John Hancock, the bold of pen, signing the "Declaration of Independence." For a time I was afraid to look at Nick, who was cracking ice and shaking things behind the bar; but I wished that he might

come back to the table, so that I could dwarf him with the news that I was about to sign a contract, drawn up by a lawyer, under provisions set forth by the "American Constitution." But he was kept busy by customers; and pretty soon I became interested in them. In came one old fellow, limping with his hand on his hip, and asked Nick what was good for sciatica. Nick thought that a little whisky was about the best thing, and after studying for a while the old fellow said that possibly it was. Another man had not been able to sleep the night before and therefore needed a drink. A judge's stomach was out of order; a lawyer had to make a speech; a farmer had fallen into the creek; a merchant hated whisky, but needed a tonic—every one had some apology to make to the bartender, and I marveled how few men took whisky for whisky's sake alone. After a time there came a lull, and Nick swaggered out from behind the bar and stood off for me to admire him.

"It won't be long before I own a half-interest in this money-makin' concern," said he; and with a swell of pride I declared, "And it won't be long before I sign a contract, sittin'

right where I am now. Have you got any good pens handy?"

"What sort of a contract?" he inquired, sitting down.

"Oh, one that'll make me a lieutenant a part of the time and a captain the other part."

"What for? To drive mules? And that's what I wanted to talk to you about. If you ever want to climb up in the world, you mustn't drive mules. Why, anybody can drive a mule. The blackest nigger in the world can drive a mule; I saw a piece in the paper the other day that said niggers could beat white men drivin' mules. What you want is to git a job somethin' like mine. Do you notice how all the big-bugs around here talk to me? They tell me how they feel and all that sort of thing. They wouldn't talk that way to a mule driver. I need somebody in here to help me—somebody to clean up of a mornin', and if you——"

"Shut up."

"Why, what's the matter with you? Tell a man to shut up in his own house? Why, I could call the town marshal and have you flung into jail for that."

"Let me show you something," said I, cheerful of manner, pretending to pass his insult, and I took out my revolver and held it so that it caught the light that fell over a sort of screen placed in front of the open door.

"What is it? A revolver? I've got two. I reckon that one was made befo' they know'd how to make 'em as well as they do now. Come in, Cap'n."

I put up my pistol before the captain saw it, while Nick went back behind the bar. And there was the contract spread out on the table before me, and it was written so plainly that I could almost read it. The captain said that he would read it to me, but I told him that he needn't mind; so he called for pen and ink, and when I had signed it, Nick was asked to put down his name as a witness, an honor which did not appear to strike him over much. After discussing the time of departure and appointing a place to meet, the captain took me to dinner with him, where we sat down to a long table with lawyers and clerks, and I remember that a negro boy, that kept off the few heavy-winged autumn flies by pulling a string attached to a big paper flap overhead,

"AND THERE WAS THE CONTRACT BEFORE ME"

dropped off into a doze but still kept up his pull at the string.

Mr. Kirk was waiting for me, and so eager was I that I began at once to tell him of my contract, even as I was climbing into the rig; and I would have shown him my copy of it, but he did not ask to see it, so much was his mind taken up with his own affairs. He had thought out the plan that I should tell the professor, and he gripped my hand more than once as we drove home.

CHAPTER XX

THERE BY THE CHEERFUL FIRE

WE SAW the professor standing in the doorway of the barn, and, getting out in a tremor, Mr. Kirk took a roundabout way to the house. As I drove up to unharness the horses and to put the rig under the shed, the professor came out and inquired as to the captain's business with me, and I told him all, busy meantime with buckles and straps. He replied that it was well, especially as he did not need me during the winter. "You are getting along toward man's estate," said he, "and if, while you are off on this trip, you can find a better place, I should advise you to take it." I thanked him, and being now done with the work of unharnessing the horses, I turned them into the barn and was preparing to back the rig under the shed when I saw the professor start off toward the house. I called him, and he halted beneath a scrub-oak tree to wait, where I soon joined him with my mind uneasy. He made as if he would walk on, but I asked him to

wait, as I had business with him. At the word business he smiled, and as if the mention of it made him tired, he leaned with his shoulder against the tree. But I was put to for a way to begin; and when his smile was shut off and with eyes turned inquiringly upon me he said, "Well," I stammered that what I wanted to say would come in a moment. And it did, after a fashion.

"Er—Mr. Kirk is in love with Amy."

"What!"

"And wants to marry her—said he never loved anybody before and would make her happy or die trying."

"Humph! Why hasn't he spoken to me about it?"

"I don't know, but I think it's because he's been too busy speaking to her. He's sort of bashful and asked me to tell you and—"

"A book peddler bashful?"

"Well, but he isn't as much of a book peddler as you think he is."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"He don't sell books at all, and his name isn't Kirk but Kirkpatrick, and he's the professor that——"

I grabbed his arms and, putting them about the tree, held his hands so that he couldn't get away, for, even though runtish, I was stronger than he ever was. He didn't snort as I thought he would, but he muttered something like a cast-iron oath, hot from the mould, and commanded me to turn him loose. But I told him no, not until he heard what I had to say, and then his countenance lighted up and he laughed. But I held him until I had said all that I wanted to say—told him how good a man Kirkpatrick was, how he loved Amy, and how she loved him; and that if he didn't give his consent, his house would never again be free from tears.

"Of course what you say has no influence on my decision," said the professor, rubbing his hands together, for I had pressed them hard against the rough bark. "No sensible father could object to so well-appointed a gentleman, and to tell you the truth, I have for some little time suspected the true state of affairs concerning him. And before seeing him, I was beginning to yield my objections. But wait a moment. All of the joke is not to be on one side. You have served him, now serve me.

Go to him and tell him that your heart failed you at the last moment and that I am still in ignorance as to who he is."

I still had a hope that I might be a lawyer, and conceived that to handle one side of a case after having finished with the other belonged to the essentials of the profession. So it was agreed that together we should walk to the house, talking as if nothing had passed between us; we did, and as we approached, Kirkpatrick came out and minced his way toward us, gazing first at the professor and then at me. And then, as he saw no sign, his countenance fell, and he walked with us up the path leading to the door. But I plucked him back, and when the professor was gone on into the house, I begged the lover's pardon for a last moment's lack of courage. "But I will wait till to-night," said I, "and when everybody but just him and me have——"

"He and I," the schoolman corrected me, and I said, "Yes, that was undoubtedly right." After a time he agreed that to wait might be well, as it would give the professor an opportunity to sleep upon the proposition.

The air was chill, a cheerful fire was burning, and we sat about the hearth. The professor's manner was gay, and I wondered that one who had taught out of so many heavy books could have so light a mind. Amy looked disappointed, for Kirkpatrick had undoubtedly told her of the plan and she must have seen that nothing had been said. With a blank-book on her knees, Nan was trying to draw a picture, a cow, after she had named it; and Mrs. Emory was plying two red cedar sticks, knitting a pink nubia.

"Louise," said the professor, "I took down our old Bible to-day, and I find that the print is fading. It hurts my eyes to read it."

"Mr. Kirk has promised us one," Mrs. Emory replied. I knew that she suspected nothing.

"Have you got any with alligator binding?" the professor inquired.

Mr. Kirk said that he didn't know, but that he thought they had all sorts of bindings.

"How soon do you think you can get it here?"

"It won't be long now," said Mr. Kirk, moving about in his chair.

"Ah-hah, hah," coughed the professor. "I

suppose that all of our neighbors who have bought from you are pleased."

"Yes," said Mr. Kirk, and then quickly he added: "Do you think it's going to rain?"

The professor answered him: "Might, if the wind should shift a little further around to the west. What is the price of your most costly Bible?"

"Ah, hah, hah," coughed Mr. Kirk. "I don't know exactly. Have much rain here in the winter time?"

"Rain! I don't know of anything better bound than a calf, but I have known the rain here to wet one through and through."

"Walter," Mrs. Emory spoke up, "what on earth are you talking about?"

"Calves—bindings. Oh, by the way, Mr. Kirk, I was out on the turnpike to-day and met a Cincinnati Bible-man. I told him about you, and he said that he would make it a point to-night to come over. Smart as a whip—asked me what house you were selling for, but I had forgotten."

"I should like to meet him," gasped Mr. Kirk. And then he broke out, "Oh, isn't this Thursday?"

The professor said that it was Thursday.

"Great goodness!" exclaimed Mr. Kirk. "I have an appointment this evening to meet a man in Scoville."

"That so? I'm glad of that," said the professor, "for I am forced to go over there this evening myself. And I am glad that I may have your company to shorten the journey. Where are you to meet this man? At the hotel?"

"Well, no, at a private house just beyond the town."

"Out the straight road—big white house on the hill?"

"Yes, I think—am quite certain it is the place."

"Well, do you know I'm glad of that? I've got to call at that very place myself."

"Oh, no, I'm wrong," cried Mr. Kirk. "It is a house quite a distance beyond that."

"You don't tell me!" exclaimed the professor. "Now, indeed, I am in luck. I have a commission from Hoover, our exiled preacher, to call at all the houses on both sides of the road for six or eight miles. I shall not here speak of the nature of the commission, but as

we drive along I shall make it known to you."

Mr. Kirk thanked him for his confidence. Mrs. Emory said that it was the first time she had heard of such a commission; and the professor spoke up, "My dear, and even the discovery of America was not heard of until—it was."

Kirk was suffering. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow. But the professor was not yet done. "My dear," he said to his wife, "I caught old man Zack Beardsley in a lie to-day."

"Why, Walter, you don't tell me!"

"Caught him in a lie. You remember, Mr. Kirk, the day you made your welcome appearance here, you incidentally said that you had sold your last Bible to old Zack. But to-day when I asked him how he liked it, he swore that he had never bought a Bible in his life."

Kirk jumped out of his chair. "Sir!" he exclaimed, "it were unbecoming in me to sail longer under false colors. I am——"

"Why," shouted the professor, "you talk exactly like Professor Kirkpatrick."

"I am, sir. And I am here to——"

"To give me your hand," broke in the professor, and then—ah, the tears of joy shed by the women folk! How everybody talked; and how, at one time, I found myself holding Nan's hand! But for a moment only; she snatched it away, boxed me velvetly with it, and then helped Amy and Mrs. Emory with their weeping. The professor and Kirkpatrick laughed as they gripped each other, and after a time we all of us were silent, as Amy stood behind Kirk's chair, with her arms about his neck. The professor took down his old Bible, smiling as he did so, and read about Ruth. It was a happy time there by the cheerful fire.

CHAPTER XXI

A POT HUNTER

HERE had been so many tears of distress followed by so many tears of happiness that I thought Amy must surely be married on the following day, but the next morning I found that the wedding had been set about two months from that time. Nan must have been somewhat of my mind, for she marveled that so distant a day should be fixed upon. "What!" cried Mrs. Emory, "do you suppose we are in such a hurry to get rid of her?"

After many of the details had been settled, and especially when all of the prospects of Kirkpatrick had been made known, such as his ownership of a piece of land and the fact that his well-provisioned old grandmother looked upon him with a kindly eye, he took his leave, as happy a man as I ever saw. When we all of us had bidden him good-bye at the gate, the professor turned somewhat severely upon me.

"Turk," said he, "let me say to you for your own good that unless you give over your deceitful ways, you are in the future to have no end of trouble. Regardless of the fact that I have ever been so kind to you, paying you eight dollars a month, when in reality you were by law bound to me, you for more than a week go about with a secret which is embarrassing to my character and prejudicial to me as a man in general. You ought to have told me at first that this man—a gentleman, I am sure—was none other than Kirkpatrick, the professor and the clandestine lover of my daughter."

Mrs. Emory, with bowed head and I think with tears, was slowly walking toward the house, but she turned back and faced the professor. "And," said she, "if Turk had done that, our troubles would just have begun, whereas now they are over."

"My dear," replied the professor, taking her arm, "you don't quite grasp the——"

"I grasp everything there is to grasp," she broke in, and at the moment she looked as if she really did, appearing more determined than I had ever seen her. We went into the

house, and for a time I sat about, waiting for the professor to put me to some sort of work, but as he did not, I went out, rather stealthily too, I'm afraid, and went over to see my old friend Champ Jones. I found him in a bad way, down with rheumatism, with no one to do him a service. He was lying propped up in bed, and a light shone forth from his eye as I entered the door. "Never was gladder to see a man in my life," he called out; and the fact that he said *man* pleased me, and fearing that he might discover his mistake and correct himself to "boy, rather," I hastily caught up his pail and went to the spring.

"Water was exactly what I wanted," he said when I returned. "Just take that big tin cup there and give me about a gallon at a snort. I crawled down to the spring last night and drank like an alligator, but found myself too weak this morning to go back. God bless you for coming."

He told me that he was sure that his affliction was caused by the prison lime in his bones. I smiled at the notion, but it was with him a serious conviction; and in my limited experience of prisons, lime, and rheumatism,

I did not feel that I was well enough equipped to argue with him. After a time I spoke of cooking something for him to eat; and he thanked me, but said that there was nothing in the house but some corn meal and coffee, but that, if I didn't mind, I could take the gun and hunt for a dish of something in the woods. If I didn't mind! Could he in any other way have conferred upon me so great a delight? I took the gun—not the big one, for that was more in the nature of artillery—and went out, tiptoeing even before crossing the road, so careful was I not to scare the game. In that part of the country there was an abundance of quail, and squirrels were plentiful; but neither a feathered nor a hairy object could I see. The situation became desperate, as in my imagination I had pictured it a case of success or starvation; but the squirrels were in their holes, and the birds were gone. In a cedar tree, green in the midst of a brown thicket, I spied something that thrilled me, a big bird, and tremblingly I aimed at him and down he came, with a great flapping of wings, an owl; but I gathered him up and set off toward Champ's house, picking the horned

hooter as I went, knowing that there had come a time when the keenest of deceptions must be practiced. At last I had him picked, and at a rivulet near the house I drew him of his powerful machinery for grinding up field mice, and triumphantly bore him into the room. Champ asked me what I had, and believing that a man with rheumatism could not have a very discriminating taste, I answered that I had been so fortunate as to shoot a pheasant.

"Good!" cried the sick man. "I couldn't ask for anything better. They are getting scarce around here, and you were in luck. How are you going to cook him?"

I remembered having heard some one say, "drunk as a boiled owl," and of course, not knowing why a boiled owl should be drunk and questioning the fact that he was drunk, I yet knew that behind all idle expressions there must lie some cause, that at some time in the past an owl must have been boiled; so I decided to boil him first and then to fry him. Champ demurred to the first part. He said that pheasants were usually tender, and that frying would be enough. But I told him that

he didn't know what an obstinate pheasant this one was, and that many of his feathers were set in the wrong way, and that he seemed to be the only survivor of a feud. This amused the old man, and he let me have my way. I built up a hot fire, with the shell-bark of a hickory tree, and soon the owl was dancing in the pot.

"Look here," said Champ, "that smells more like a boiled rat than a pheasant. Don't believe that boiling is quite agreeable to his nature. Better try frying a while."

I told him that I would, pretty soon, knowing that he had not yet been boiled enough to be anything like tender; and I then engaged myself in telling of the outcome over at the professor's. The old man laughed till the rheumatism, a most jealous master, I have always been led to believe, racked him with pain. I went to him and rubbed his legs, and it helped him, for after a while he ceased to groan. It was now time to fry the bird, and after pretty hard work with a sharp knife I cut him up and, covering the pieces with flour, put them into a skillet. When he was brown in his feathers in the tree, he was a most

formidable looking thing; but now that he was brown in the skillet, there didn't appear to be much to him. "But there is enough," I smiled to myself, as I put his breast on a tin plate. Intent upon the owl, it is but natural that I should have forgotten to mention that I had baked a hoe-cake and made a pot of coffee. My patient's eyes showed that he was hungry, and his square jaws indicated that he was determined, qualities both of which I felt to be on this occasion not only valuable but essential. With a sharp knife he cut off a piece of the owl, and I turned my face away as he began to chew it, for it made a noise as if he had taken a piece of rubber between his teeth. But he ate it all—result of the square jaws—and, shaking his head as I took away the plate, he remarked, "Lorenzo, I reckon you know for what two virtues your illustrious namesake, Lorenzo Dow, was mostly celebrated."

"I don't know that I do," I answered, putting the plate and the cup on a table that looked as if it, too, might have rheumatism in its legs.

"Well, we'll skip one, which was physical

bravery, and come at once to the other, which was telling the truth under all circumstances. Do you understand?"

"I think I do, sir."

"Ah, and thinking you do, are you willing to stand there and tell me that the thing you shot was a pheasant? Are you?"

"Well, I'm not much acquainted with pheasants. I——"

"That may be true enough. But how about chicken hawks and buzzards and owls?"

"Buzzards, did you say?"

"Yes—and here, for the Lord's sake don't tell me that I have eaten a piece of a buzzard. Tell me anything else, but clear me of that. What was it?"

"Well, you know, sir, I couldn't find anything to shoot, and I didn't want to come back with nothing, because I knew you were hungry — was ashamed to come back — so I shot——"

"Lord a massy! Not a buzzard?"

"An owl, sir."

He lay back with a deep breath of relief, and I went at him again and rubbed his legs. Pretty soon he began to laugh. "It's all right,

my son, just so you don't feed me on buzzards."

I was so stricken with remorse and shame, that I offered to eat the rest of the owl; and I would have done it, but he said, "You are at liberty to help yourself to anything in my house, and particularly to owl, but you needn't eat it. I've played such jokes many a time."

But I would not view it in the light of a joke, for by this time I regarded it as a crime. What had my experience, my seeing "the world" availed me? I was still without a sense of judgment, ready to do a thing that any fool might see would call for repentance. But old Champ declared that it was good for him, in that it had given him something new to think about; and when I rubbed his legs harder and harder, he rewarded me by declaring that I had saved his life.

"I had forgotten that old wild-hog ham hanging up there from the rafters," said he, looking aloft. "It has been there five years at least, getting better all the time; and if you have a mind to, you might get it down and broil a few slices." This opened the way for practical atonement; and after getting the

ham down, at the risk of breaking my neck, I broiled for him a goodly slice and was bringing it to him when there came a knock at the door. The sick man called out, "Come in," and the professor entered. He was not surprised to see me there, and did not look upon me unkindly, as formerly he had been wont to do whenever he met me by accident. He was sorry, he said, to see his staunch old adversary laid up.

"Have a seat there and don't let my being laid up worry you," replied old Champ. "I am still a match for you on any point of faith." This was enough, and at it they went, tugging over the same old ground; and when they appeared to be at their warmest, that is to say, just short of blows, Champ broke off: "You are a stout soldier, sir, but the stoutest of soldiers needs rations. Here, Turk, bring the remains of that pheasant." I might have hesitated and with a look might have entreated him to spare the professor and *me*. I say "might have," but I didn't. In my usual state of heedlessness, I brought the tin plate of owl to the professor, and I saw him worrying with a wing, a veritable Barlow knife, half

open, floured and fried. This he lost somewhere during the excitement of his talk and got hold of a leg, and with this he worried a long time, but suddenly he clapped his hand to his mouth.

With a great effort Champ turned over, face to the wall, and when I saw him shaking, I sprang at him and vigorously began to rub his legs.

"Jones, what the devil is this you've given me to eat?"

"P-p-pheasant," Champ spluttered.

"Pheasant," grunted the professor; "bone wrapped with tarred rope."

At this old Jones yelled. The professor threw down the tin plate and stood looking upon him. "This may be a joke, sir, but I wish to tell you that I don't like it."

If he did not like it from Jones, how would he take it from me? What would he do when it should be made known to him that I was the cause of it all? Jones turned his face from the wall, and lying on his back muttered, "Owl." "Owl!" gasped the professor between a groan and a retch.

"Sit down, and we'll finish our argument,"

said old Champ. This was an inducement, and the professor sat down. "Let me tell you something," Jones went on. "The other day a sort of wise man came over to see me, and during his stay we just naturally dropped into a dispute over certain things pertaining to religion and the soul of man. After we had threshed about all the mouldy straw on hand—and we had a good deal of it—this wise man, becoming wiser, said, said he, 'Jones, anybody that would arguy on religion would eat an owl.' Of course I hooted at this idea——"

"Hooted, having the owl in mind," broke in the professor.

"Exactly so, sir," agreed old Champ. "Well, as I say, I hooted at the idea; and then, as there was no way to settle it, we branched off into something else. I had forgotten all about it, even the visit of the wise man, when just now here he came again. 'Jones,' said he, 'I heard you were sick, so I have come over to bring you a pheasant that I killed this morning.' And, sir, even before I had got through thanking him, he had begun to fry the bird. As usual, we opened

with our religious spat, and the first thing I knew I was eating—what you spoke of just now as bone and tarred rope. Then he cried out, 'What did I tell you a religious controverser would eat?' 'Owl,' I acknowledged, feeling a twist at the stomach. 'Ah, hah,' said he, 'and that's exactly what you have done. Good-day,' and with that he marched out, leaving me to speculate upon the great amount of truth there is in this old world."

The professor lay back with a laugh, and I knew that Champ had saved me. After this there was a talk on abolition and the war, which everybody ought to see was coming, but which very few did see; and then the professor took his leave, retching a little as he caught sight of the tin plate. I followed him outside and told him that, as there was nothing for me to do over at the house, I would remain and take care of Jones until he should be so far recovered as to help himself. "Ah," said the professor, looking at me, "a very commendable notion, I assure you." I thanked him, and he went away.

When I told Champ that it was my determination to stay and to take care of him, his

eyes looked moist, but immediately afterward he began to laugh at the professor and the owl. Following his directions, I found several old newspapers in a box as black as a coffin, and as well as I could I read to him, and was startled to find the world on the very brink of eternal destruction, but noticing that the papers were dated back several years, soon found myself not without some little vestige of hope. While I was reading, who should come but Nan? She had been sent by her mother with jellies and preserves, cakes and pickles, marmalade and catsup, quite enough to have given gout and rheumatism to any woodcutter whose ax we could hear ringing in the distant wood. The old man thanked her, more with his eyes than with his words; and then he told her a story about a bear that, one cold winter's night, forgot all fear and came and stood with his back against the house to warm himself.

"I hope you didn't kill him," said Nan.

"No, indeed. I was so much pleased that I invited him in, and if he had come, I should have given him my best bed; but about that time he was taken with a lonesome feeling

and went on back to his home, wherever it was; and so many years have passed since then that I reckon he's dead long ago."

There was nothing in the story to interest Nan. She wasn't a child. She wanted to hear about human affairs, and she asked him why he had never married. "Oh, that is a painful subject," he said, just to see, I thought, what effect it would have on her; and she brightened and said, "Then tell me about it." Then he told her that once he was engaged to marry the handsomest girl in the neighborhood—all girls engaged to be married were the handsomest—and as the time for the wedding drew near, a great discovery was made on the part of the girl, and that broke off the match."

"What was the discovery?" Nan eagerly inquired.

"Why, some one told her it had been found out that I was the ugliest man in the county. This set her on her guard, and when I came again, she gave me a good look and found out that the report was true and it almost broke her heart. She couldn't marry me after having been so cruelly deceived; for you see I

had assured her upon the word of a gentleman that I was handsome." Here Nan, who stood swinging her bonnet by the strings, playfully struck him with it and ran out of the house. I followed and asked her if she would not let me bear her company home, but she turned about and made a mouth at me. "When did you become my beau?"

"I never have, but I wouldn't mind being."

"Well, you never will. As soon as Amy marries and goes back to the college, she is going to send me a professor, and I'm going to marry him. She says that they are as plentiful over there as yearling calves are over here."

"And they are as poor as Job's turkey," said I.

"Oh, but what difference does that make? They can talk nice and they have pretty white hands. I wouldn't marry a man with hard hands. Good-bye."

"Wait a moment, Nan. You——"

"I'm old enough now to be called Miss Nan —by you."

"Miss Nan, you know I'm going away, and you may never see me again."

"Do you promise me that?"

"How can you have so little heart?"

"Little heart as what? I don't know what you mean, I'm sure. Well, I don't suppose you'll be over at the house again before you go, so good-bye."

She went away singing, and swinging her bonnet by the strings.

CHAPTER XXII

TWO REFORMERS

DAY and night, until a day or so before my departure south with Captain Starks, I attended upon old Champ, and before leaving him I had the satisfaction to see that he was almost as well as ever. Soon came the day for my leave-taking. I speak of it as if it were a ceremony. It was not. The professor shook hands with me as if it were a sort of welcomed return, Mrs. Emory gave me a tender word and a soft touch, and then while the captain was waiting with my horse at the gate, I turned to look for Nan. I found her behind the house, this time pretending to play with a dog, for there was no dog there; she was popping her fingers at nothing and was talking to the air.

"I have come to tell you good-bye."

"Oh, have you? Good-bye."

"Is that all?"

"All? All of what?"

"Nan, don't let us separate this way."

"This way? How?"

"Oh, you know. If you like me, and are mad at yourself for doing it, tell me so. You know, all along I tried to like Amy better than I did you, but I couldn't, and——"

"Have you told her good-bye?"

"Early this morning before she drove away in the pony cart. Tried always to like her better than you, for she was kind to me when it seemed that I hadn't a friend in the world, when your father was harsh with me and your mother was almost afraid to speak a word in my favor. But I couldn't. You stung me, but I kept on coming around so you could sting me; you called me all sorts of mean names, but whenever you spoke, it was music; it wasn't a flute, but a sort of a fife, making my blood leap. It was a sort of feud call. It——"

"What are you talking about?" she broke in, and she had her bonnet on and was pulling at the strings. And before I could say another word, she was changed both in attitude and in expression of countenance. She

leaped away from me and looked at me, and for a moment I felt that never before had I been so thoroughly hated. She repeated, "Like you and mad at myself for doing it! Oh, Turk, I hope I'm not that big a fool." For a moment she had softened, but in the softening there was contemptuous pity, harder to bear than her hate; and I turned away from her. At the corner of the house I looked back, but she was not looking after me, and so I left her.

This time Captain Starks' drove was much reduced from the size of the former one, nor had he employed more than a third as many men, but he said that during the excursions which he expected to make we should pick up many a brute before reaching New Orleans. The expedition was dull in the day, for I had passed over the same ground on the previous trip; and, as before, it was without incident at night. We had got pretty well down into Tennessee when the Captain, saying that it was now time for his first little excursion, commanded me to take charge of the camp and to await his return, took one man with him and departed. Along toward evening—we had

halted here about noon—we heard from some of the farmers who lived near that two men had recently come into that neighborhood and were making a great stir for the temperance cause. Al Chamberlain, my lieutenant, and I decided that we would go to hear them. Not frequently, but occasionally, my old hill-top thirst came back to torture me, and I was on the lookout for every temperance argument that might chance to lie in my way. The meeting was held in an old log schoolhouse, at early candle lighting, and on the way to the place Al and I dropped in with a Justice of the peace who had several times heard these remarkable men. "And they are remarkable," said he as we walked along with him. "Without any education they get up and talk about the drinking evil, largely from experience, you understand, until any one must come away convinced."

"Convinced as every one must be before going," said Al.

"Yes, that's true," replied the Justice of the peace, "but somehow these men have a strong way of putting things."

As we drew near, a hymn arose. The

house was but poorly lighted with tallow candles; but when the two men came out upon the platform, Al caught hold of me, crying, "Sit down. What's the matter with you?" The lecturers were known as Jackson and Johnson, and such may have been their names, but by me they were remembered as Mose and Tab. Without restraint I suppose that I would have rushed upon the platform, but Al had a cooling influence as well as a physical force. Nothing, however, could drive from my soul that long-harbored thirst for revenge; and while the scoundrels were talking, first one and then the other, I told Al, softly whispering, of my claim upon them and outlined my plan. He was quietly to go out, return to the camp, tell the boys, go down into the woods, make a fire near a log, and then come back to me. I was his "superior officer," but mere suggestion was all the command necessary, and more than willingly he went out, and I sat there, endeavoring to listen to them, but all I could hear were my own smothered cries as I lay across a log with my mouth in the dirt. But I heard enough to know that in them there had been no repent-

ance, that they were the same scoundrels as ever. Soon a hat was passed around, and money was contributed. Isn't it singular that, no matter how brutal a man may appear, there is always a hearing waiting for him? A hearing among gentle folk, and money for him, too, if only he tells of his many debasements. Gazing at the scoundrels, lost in the sweet hugging unto myself of long deferred revenge, I did not observe the return of Chamberlain. He touched me and I jumped. "Everything's all right, and the boys are out there, tickled to death," he whispered. "Found a log and a brush pile in the right place, just far enough off in the woods." I pressed his hand in my gratitude, and swore under my breath that never before had I found so true a friend. Mose called for the singing of a hymn, done mainly by poor women who had drunken husbands, and then the congregation was dismissed. The two lecturers were quartered in a negro cabin not far away, and giving them time to get well into their house and to settle themselves, we followed along, six of us, speaking not a word. Light streamed through the chinks of the log

wall, and peeping in we saw Mose and Tab counting their money.

"They have begun to weaken a little," said Mose.

"Yes," Tab replied, "but we was putty strong at first and in the nature of things couldn't expect it to keep up. Reckon they'll stand three or four more milkin's."

I stepped back into the dark, and Al knocked at the door. There was a hasty shuffling within as if they were putting away their money, and then Tab opened the door.

"Brothers, won't you come in?" he said. And the brothers began to file in, I the last.

"Brothers," said Al, "hold out your hands. Here, Pete, you and Sam with your rope." I said never a word, but stood near the door with my hat pulled down over my face. There was no attempt at resistance, not even an apparent objection, for meekly they held forth their hands and were tied. "Don't be any more scared than you can help," said Al. "You may deserve it, but we're not going to hang you. We are going to give you a little reminder of things that sometimes happen up in Kentucky. Fall in."

I saw a light, the brush pile on fire, and led the way, as yet not having given my old associates an opportunity to recognize me. Though some distance in advance, I could hear their mumbled inquiries as to what we intended to do with them, and I heard Mose declare that he was willing to give over all the money that had been collected; I remember also laughing to myself at Al's reply: "Brothers, you must not think that money is everything. Comes near it, I admit, but it's not quite all. Come over this way a little more. There's a thorn bush along here somewhere, and you might scratch yourselves. Might pull off some of your lamb's wool."

Reaching the fire, I stood with my back turned toward them. I heard them muttering objections. "What do you want to take our coats off for, gentlemen? Don't cut 'em off. Untie our hands. We won't try to git away."

"Won't you? Gentle lambs, ain't you?" Their hands were untied, they were stripped to the waist, and then they were tied again. "Now, brothers," said Al, "you will please stand still while we put a few coils of rope around your ankles."

Over in an old field not far off I had noticed a pear tree, and toward it I went with my heart laughing, to gather my weapons, sprouts almost as tough as rawhide. I soon returned with six or eight of them nicely trimmed. Then it was that I stood before them, and I saw them quail beneath my eye. They knew me. I had grown, and I had changed; but fear has a keen discernment, and the scoundrels trembled. Mose began to beg.

"That was a long time ago," he whined, "and you ought to have forgot it by this time. I didn't think you could have so hard a heart. Why, Mr. Turk, them sprouts you've got there will cut a man all to flinders. Don't you think you can find it in yo' heart to forgive us?"

I didn't make any theatric speech. I simply said to Al and the rest, 'Put 'em across the log, boys." Al suggested that they ought to be gagged, and this was done. There was a moon, I remember. The creek, not far away, was singing a low song. And I halted for a moment, while rolling up my sleeves, to see if, indeed, I could find pity in my heart. But I couldn't. Somehow my revenge didn't

seem to be so personal; I felt that these men had disgraced the memory of my father by whipping his son, and that the spirits of all the Griffins were looking at me. They must have been happy. I took Mose first. How he bit his gag and groaned! I smelled his hot blood. Al touched me on the arm. "You have given him enough," he said. And then I took Tab. "He has fainted," said one of the boys, and I left off. We helped them to put their clothes on and then turned away. In the night I awoke with the smell of hot blood in my nostrils, and I turned sick. We were sleeping in the open, and I got up and stirred the fire. I heard the murmur of the creek and saw the moon going down in a distant wood. What was that something, not warm but sickening, against my heart? Repentance? What is mercy but a cheating of justice? But is not the world better, brighter, and is not man nobler when sometimes justice has been cheated?

Al looked up from his blanket. "What's the matter? Can't you sleep?"

"Yes, but I wish that fellow hadn't fainted."

"Hope you haven't turned sorry."

"Hope you'll not be sorry, Al, for the part you took."

"Not me," he replied. "When such punishment is deserved, I like to be where it's going on."

He turned over and went to sleep, and I—I went down into the woods, to the cabin where the lecturers had lived, but they were gone.

CHAPTER XXIII

A POOR BOY'S WALLET

ALONG about ten o'clock the next day it was found that not only were Mose and Tab gone, but with them had disappeared the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars, contributed by the citizens toward the building of a Sons' of Temperance Lodge. Though at the time there was scarcely any stir, yet the news of the whipping had got abroad, and when it was known that the sufferers were also thieves, men came up to congratulate me. But it was an honor that I did not relish, for that hot smell was still sickening to my nostrils; and I remembered what old Champ had said about the memory of the nose.

It was near noon when Captain Starks returned from his excursion out into the remote country; and when he came, I was shocked to see him bring five negroes, two women and three men, chained together. I asked him what he was going to do with

them, and he answered, "Going to take them South."

"But I am employed to drive mules and not negroes," I replied.

"You are employed to drive whatever I desire you to drive."

"My contract says mules."

"Your contract says, 'to drive or transport any and all sorts of property.'"

I took out the paper, which, as I now recalled, I had not read when I signed it, and there, sure enough, was the clause just quoted by the captain. "Does that satisfy you?" he inquired.

"No, it doesn't. I'm not a negro driver, and no contract on the earth can compel me to be," and with that I tore the paper into bits and scattered them about on the ground.

"What are you going to do?" the captain asked, scowling at me.

"I'm going to quit."

"Ah, I understand that whipping is rather fashionable around here."

"Yes, for those that deserve it."

"And doesn't a man deserve it when he breaks his contract?"

"Captain," said I, "we have been friends, and you have been kind to me. Once you gave me a revolver, and——"

"And you would shoot me with it."

"Rather than to let you whip me? Yes."

He walked away as if he were studying about something, which indeed he was; and coming back he said to me, "If you quit me here, you quit without a cent of pay."

"Yes, I know that—expected it."

He turned away again, and I started off down the road toward Nashville. Al called after me to tell me good-bye. I halted, and he came up, saying as he approached, "I think you're foolish, Turk. These niggers are going South, whether you help take them or not."

"Yes, that's true enough, but——"

"Come on back and go with us. We'll have lots of fun in New Orleans."

"No; good-bye," and I left him there in the road, and looking back I saw him saddling his horse. The "command," as we termed it, passed me before I was far on my journey; and though the rest of them spoke, the captain did not take notice of me. I had eaten

nothing since early morning, and along toward night I halted at the gate of a house where there was a great barking of dogs. When a man came out, I asked him for supper and for lodging. After a few questions he invited me into the handsomest room I had ever seen, where there was a cheerful fire and a young woman picking at a piano. I wished that she would play, but was afraid to ask her. After supper, however, I was bolder and asked her, and she smiled and said that she had left all of her music at school. I didn't know what she meant by it. How any one could leave a tune at school was rather perplexing to me, and I wondered if they shut it up in a room, taking care lest it escape through the window. But after a while she played; strange pieces they were, and at times running so heavy down at one end of the piano and then up so light at the other end that I didn't like them over much.

The resident and his wife were kind to me, and I was put to sleep in a bright room, where there was a fire and a bed that I was almost ashamed to disturb. Such treatment to a tramp was unusual, I knew, and I wondered

at it. I had a few dollars, three, I think, and next morning I offered to pay the man, but he shook his head. When I had thanked him and taken up my wallet, he followed me out upon the turnpike. "I just wanted to say a word," said he. "Not long before you came last night, a man with a drove of mules, in passing, took occasion to tell me that there would soon be a foot traveler along the road, and that doubtless he would want food and a bed. 'But drive him off,' said he. 'Have nothing to do with him, for he has violated his contract and has refused to help me take these negroes South.' I honored you for it, young man. Just now you offered to pay me. But don't you need money?"

I was deeply affected, and all I could do was to thank him, refuse his money, and hasten away. Soon arriving in the city, I began to look about for something to do; and along in the afternoon, being pinched with hunger, I went into a snack house, as I thought, but upon entering I found that it was a place of some pretension and therefore beyond my means; but ashamed to withdraw, I sat down and for the first time in life was

presented with a bill of fare. At a table further toward the rear of the long room, several youths were eating and drinking, and I fancied that they were laughing at me, but I paid no attention to them. I ordered bacon and eggs; and while I was waiting, the youths came along, and although my wallet was not in their way, one of them gave it a kick, and the next moment I was at his collar. I beat him in the face, and I saw his blood come in a sort of flash, and there was a great outcry and an overturning of chairs. At one time it seemed to me in my blind fury that at least three of the party were dancing about me, clawing and striving to hit me, and then I saw the gleam of a dirk. I clapped my hand on my pistol, but was seized from behind by police officers, disarmed and hurried to prison without having had an opportunity to taste of my bacon and eggs.

I was locked in an ill-smelling dungeon, and on the following morning was brought before a magistrate. My enemies appeared against me and told a marvelous tale of desperate assault upon them, but the keeper of the snack house and one of his waiters came for-

ward with the truth. The magistrate was a kind-hearted old gentleman; and as I looked at him, I fancied that he, too, had come to that town a poor and friendless boy.

Turning to my enemies and speaking particularly to the aggressor, he said, "I am going to turn this young man loose, and you and your friends must pay the cost. Hereafter, don't make it a point to insult a poor boy by going out of your way to kick his wallet." He told me to remain, and when the others were gone, having paid the costs, the magistrate handed over my pistol and said to me, "This is a bad world we have broken into, my son, and we must try to make the best of it." He then asked me many questions concerning myself, which I answered in a straightforward manner, and when I came down to the breaking of my contract with the captain, he shook his head. "You ought not to have done that—still I don't blame you." He offered me money, but I wouldn't take it; and then he offered his kindly hand, which I took and shook in hearty gratitude.

Upon going out of the court-room, I went straightway to the snack house and raised a

laugh by saying that I had come back for my bacon and eggs.

The proprietor ordered a dish set before me, and when I had eaten, he refused to charge me anything, saying that I had shown fine mettle in fighting those reprobates. "I hope they'll keep out of here," said he, "for they drive away custom." I asked him for work, and he said that he could give me a job at waiting on table, but I thanked him and declined. I told him that I was willing to do man's work, but I'd starve rather than to be man's servant. From the restaurant I went down to the steamboat landing, where there was much life, the singing of deck hands, and the loud swearing of the mates. I selected one boat, the Blanche Lewis, and going on board asked the captain, a jolly, kindly man, if he didn't want to hire me. He looked at me and laughed, but so good-humoredly that I laughed, too; and then he said, "You don't appear strong enough for a deck hand, and, besides, we'd rather have negroes. They digest the mate's cursing better than white men do. Who peeled you up there on the side of the head?"

I told him about my fight, and he roared, and cried out to some one, the pilot, I believe, "Oh, Bob, here's the chap that thrashed the Kirkman boys."

"Bob," a trim little man, came forward to look at me and, after asking me where I was from, inquired if I thought that I could discharge the duties of second mate. I leaped at the idea.

"I was thinking of that," said the captain. "How's your stock of oaths?" he inquired and laughed.

I told him that circumstances had compelled me to be apt in that line, and that I regarded my stock as above the ordinary, for which he clapped me on the shoulder and told me that I might go to work. "Look here," he said before dismissing me, "my name is John Bateman, and everybody will tell you I'm the easiest man in the world to please as long as a fellow acts right; but when he doesn't, why, I simply wrench off a bell and throw it at his head. Go out there now and boss the niggers."

The work was not hard, and I enjoyed my authority as "mud clerk." Sometimes the mate would curse me, though never where

the deck hands could hear him; but I cursed him back, and thus we got along well together. We were soon on our trip down the river, and the jolly captain walked the deck as proudly as if he had been commander of a man-of-war. Late in the evening, while we were taking on sacks of grain at a muddy landing, I saw two men come aboard, Mose and Tab; and I heard some one say to the mate, "Ugly-looking customers, them." They had not seen me, I thought, and I was not anxious that they should. They paid for deck passage, and I watched them until they stretched themselves out to sleep. Early the next morning, while we were unloading boxes of merchandise near a small town, and when I was busy on the shore, Mose and Tab came off, paying no attention to me as they ascended the slippery bank. But suddenly some one cried, "Look out!" I leaped to one side, and a bullet fired by Mose missed me narrowly. As they ran away, I believe that with my revolver I could have killed them both, but I let them go. Two days later we received news of them. In robbing a house, they had beaten an old man to death, and a mob had hanged them to a tree.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SWORD IN THE AIR

HOUGH holding to the hope that on some future day I might be a lawyer and by my acquired shrewdness catch a witness in a lie, after the manner of an old fellow whom I had seen browbeating his way through a case, still it seemed that I had now entered upon my life's work. Within a few weeks I had made such progress in the art of profanity, Captain Bateman declared, and could worry so much work out of the negro deck hands, that I was promoted to the position of first mate. Immediately afterward, in the light of a pine torch, I gathered all of my forces into one mighty effort to construct a letter to Nan. I told her something that she must have viewed as a piece of startling news—that at last I had found a man "with the ability to appreciate my worth." And as she was not supposed to know anything of the duties and moreover the responsibilities of a Cumberland River

mate, I proceeded to enlighten her. Of course the captain was an important figure, but the mate! Without him the boat could not be loaded, and if such were the case, of what was the use that it should make a trip? Therefore the mate was the boat. Perhaps he did not receive as large a salary as the captain, but to the mate there were in this life other things aside from money. I told her of a compliment generously paid to me by the captain, that I was an artist in sulphur, which any one must know was, in our line, superior to being an artist in oil. I felt so proud of the letter that I was inclined to read it to the captain, but refrained, because along toward the end there crept in a sentiment, so delicate and suggestive, that even now I recall it with a tender smile: "When we parted, you pretended to be playing with a dog. Wish I was a dog."

About a week afterward the clerk of the boat handed a letter to me, and I put it in the pocket of my flannel shirt, to let my heart beat against it until night, when again we should be out upon the dark current of the river, and then, hiding from all vulgar glances,

I could read it. The time came. Was an envelope ever so hard to tear open? It was like Nan herself refusing to talk. How black was her ink, and how steady her hand!

"I would have answered sooner," she said, "but was playing with a dog. Kirkpatrick is here for a few days. He says he couldn't stay away any longer. The marriage is to take place two weeks from to-day. Mr. Bloodgood was over Sunday, and I asked him if he needed any more boot lotion. He bristled up and said he was going to whip you, and I told him he could. Can't he? Papa says your refusal to help drive the negroes proves that his teachings haven't been altogether in vain. Do you like pink? I am to wear a pink dress at the wedding. I wish it were done, I mean the dress, so I could try it on and tell you about it. Captain Starks says you whipped Mose and Tab unmercifully. Old Riddleberry Buck came over and asked me if it were true, as if I knew anything about it. But I let on like I did; I told him exactly how it was done, and he laughed like a rusty saw. Now I wonder what put that into my head. But he has saw teeth, hasn't he? The other day

dad got a long letter from Mr. Hoover, and he says that the war is coming fast down toward us, and I looked out but couldn't see anything of it. It may come soon enough; and it makes no difference what you are, I'm a Yankee. Mr. Bloodgood says if I want him to, he will fight for the North. Isn't that nice of him? I told him that I knew of somebody that wouldn't do that much for me, and he grinned as if his boots were hurting him again. Of course you remember old Mr. Horner, the man you stole the whisky from. They found him sitting in his stillhouse dead, with a jug of whisky beside him. Let that be warning to you. I am glad you have climbed so high. I didn't expect it of you. But when are you going to try to be a gentleman? Dad says that all the pollparrots up and down the river learn to swear from the mates. You have learned to write so it can be read here and there, but when are you going to learn to spell? We haven't had but one crying flurry since you left. It was when Amy said she thought she was going to be the happiest girl in the world, and mamma said, 'Well, if you are so anxious to get away from us all, it is a wonder

you hadn't run away and married before you came home from school.' She was crying when Mr. Kirkpatrick came in, and he said something about 'far be it from him,' and dad said 'far be it from him,' and mamma wiped away her tears. Who should come over last Saturday night but Mr. Nick Bowles? He is as handsome as ever and had on a blue vest with a red gourd vine crawling all over it. Dad didn't treat him any too well, afraid that he had come to see me, but he hadn't. He wanted your address so he could write to you and make you a business offer, and then mamma turned on him. She said that you might be poor and one of the ugliest boys on the earth, but that you had some little pride and that your pride would keep you out of the saloon business. I wonder how long it will be before they hang him. The other night we found a little lamb almost frozen, and we put it on the hearth and gave it some milk, and now it is standing beside me as I write. I don't know what else to say. Oh, you wish you were a dog? Wouldn't you rather be this little sheep? No, you couldn't be—it isn't a black one. Well, I have written

you two letters, but you will notice that I didn't send but one of them. I tore the other one up. I don't suppose I shall ever see you again; and if I don't, good-bye."

All these words, and not one gleam of light thrown upon that great mystery, her heart. I read the letter again and again, delving for some hidden essence, but it wasn't there; so I tore the paper into bits and sifted them out upon the black bosom of the river.

I did not write again, I hadn't the heart; and though I worked hard at my calling, it seemed more of a drudgery and less of a profession every day. The clerk had a number of books, and I read many of them, flimsy romances, and thus my time was all but wasted. But I laid hold of one volume that possessed a vital interest, a work on military tactics. The war was coming. Along the shores they were beating up volunteers. A man from the North spoke of the coming struggle as a "mere breakfast spell"; and at several landings, sometimes late in the night when rain was falling, I heard people shout that one Southerner could whip three Yankees. My mind was made up, but I wanted to

enlist from my native State. So, one morning, at the wharf in Nashville, I bade the Blanche Lewis good-bye. On the train going toward Louisville, I heard that Sumter had been fired upon, and at a station where the train halted, I saw them hoisting a new flag. In the quiet air it looked impudent but courageous, and men saluted it. Occasionally an old fellow would shake his head; it was evidently the flag of the thoughtless young. Northern Tennessee was almost a solid camp, all for the South; but along up in Kentucky there was blue mixed in with the gray. Neighbors, friends, brothers, they were loth to smite one another. But swords were drawn, and the conflict could not long be averted. It is harder to reconcile differences of principle than differences of blood.

At the railway station where I had seen the tan bark, I hired a spring wagon from a farmer and drove into Scoville. The town was mostly for the Union, but in an old field not far away there was a Confederate camp. I saw Nick, in gray, trailing a cavalry sword. He told me that Colonel Pearson would like to see me, and that he was in the Confederate

camp. Thither I went and found him sitting beneath a tree, writing names on a roll of paper. When I told him my name he got up and shook hands with me.

"I don't know whether you know anything about it or not," said he, "but my people favored your people against the Nesbitts."

"Yes, I have heard of it."

He nodded. "And my oldest brother lost his life. Now, the only surviving kinsman of the Nesbitts is out for the Yankees, and Lou Biddle, the town marshal, although he opposed abolition and is the man who really organized a gang to whip Professor Emory on a night that you no doubt remember—he, Biddle, is a Yankee captain."

"Then what do you want me to do?" I asked, and he pointed to the names on his roll. "I want you here. I have organized an independent command. Some people may go so far as to call it a guerrilla band. But no matter. I know your blood. Join me, and I will make you a captain. Remember your obligation. My people helped yours. Will you give me your hand?"

I did. He called a negro and ordered him

to bring forth Kaintuck, a beautiful iron-gray horse, which was presented to me, and then I was assigned to quarters. Before putting on my uniform, I requested permission to ride over to the professor's, but upon this the colonel frowned.

"You will find him a Yankee major, full-fledged, and as bitter as gall-nut. However, go ahead; you know how to take care of yourself."

It was about ten o'clock at night when I halted at the gate. I halloed, the professor came to the door, and when I made myself known, he bade me come in. He looked at me hard and close when I came into the light that fell through the door, to determine my color, but finding no mark of either one side or the other, shook hands with me. There was in the room none save himself until I entered, and then we stood cool, face to face. He wore the uniform of a Federal major, and his shoulder straps gleamed in the light.

"Well, you have come back," he said, and before I replied, he added, "Sit down." But I thanked him, saying that I had but a few moments to stay. Then he looked at me, and

in his gaze I read his inquiry as to why I had come. It was to see Nan—that was all, but I could not tell him. I wondered where she was.

"Does Miss Amy live——"

"Mrs. Kirkpatrick lives in her own home," he broke in.

"Is Miss Nan visiting her?"

"My younger daughter is here, at home, sir," he said.

Mrs. Emory came in from the dining-room. She was surprised to see me, but the professor cleared his throat, and she seemed instantly to alter her intention of bidding me welcome. But standing there with nothing to say was awkward, and I sat down. The professor continued to stand, on the hearth, back to the fire. Would Nan never come? She did, opened the door just a little, and peeped in, and then she entered, shivering as if she were cold. About her she wore a red shawl, a sumach bush touched by the frost, I thought. She held out her hand. Again the professor cleared his throat, and she laughed, which made her seem colder than her shiver.

"I suppose," said the professor, "you have come back to——"

"Eat supper," Nan broke in. "You don't look any too well fed, Turk."

"Mr. Griffin," the professor corrected her.

"Oh, excuse me, Mr. Griffin," said Nan. "But won't you have some supper?"

At this the professor was not pleased; and I, thanking her, told her that I had eaten, which she knew was a lie. After an embarrassing pause the professor began to wind his watch.

"Come, sir," he said, "tell us where you stand. Have you come back to fight for or against your State? She has refused to go out of the Union. Have *you* refused?"

"I have called, Major, to spend a few peaceful moments in your house, the only home I have ever known. And I don't think it will be hard for you to remember that I was willing to defend this home with my life."

"I know all about that, sir. But wasn't it quite as much your inherent fondness for a fight as——"

"Walter," his wife spoke up, "don't discredit his faithfulness. You know he was faithful. You know he could have got you into trouble by simply uttering a word. To tell you the truth, I am sorry for him this

minute. Don't you see he wants to tell us how much he thinks of us? Don't you?"

The professor smiled, but in bitterness. "He does not think enough of us to——"

"But, Walter, he hasn't said which side he is on, and I don't know that we have any right to ask him."

"Yes, we have, Louise. I have the right and not only that, the authority vested in me by the Government. If you are a rebel, say so."

"I don't know that I like the word rebel any too well."

"Oh, I think it's beautiful," said Nan. "It sounds like running away and having a good time."

"Nanette," solemnly spoke the professor, "it is high time you were leaving off your silliness."

I arose and, standing squarely in front of the professor, said to him, "It doesn't require any beating about the bush to find out which side I am on. A long time ago you asked me, and I told you. It was born in me to fight for the South. I will not try to explain why. It is not that I wish the negroes to be kept in slavery. I don't give a snap for the

"HIS SWORD WAS HANGING NEAR THE MANTLEPIECE"

negro one way or the other. But I belong to the family of the South."

"Get out of my house."

I bowed to him. "But won't you let me go upstairs to look once again at my garret—my bed?"

"Out with you, or I'll strike you to the earth."

His sword was hanging near the mantelpiece. He seized it, stripped it of the scabbard and stood with it in his hand. I made no show of resentment. My blood leaped, but it fell back cool. Nan was holding the door open. As I passed out, she stepped down into the yard. I heard the professor roar at her. I heard his sword strike against something. But I seized her in my arms—seized her with such fury that she could make no outcry—seized her and kissed her like a savage, like an animal devouring its prey—kissed her hot lips; and when I released her, she sank upon the steps, and there was the professor with his sword flashing above my head. I sprang back as the blade cleft the air, and then I ran, not in fear but in wild delight, and leaped upon my horse.

CHAPTER XXV

DID NOT BEG FOR HIS LIFE

NO TARTAR that had stolen a maiden ever galloped more furiously than I did through the darkness and the splashing mud, back to the camp. I knew that henceforth Nan was to be my mortal enemy, with just cause to take my life if opportunity ever offered, but I palliated my brutal conscience with the reflection that she had brought it upon herself. Year after year, had she not tantalized me in my heart-hunger for a kind word? Had she not gazed at me through her cross-barred fingers and danced in mockery when for one look of sympathy I would have thanked her on my knees? But with all this self-defense, I felt that I had robbed her, and in my mind the kisses became tangible things, roses torn to pieces. Ah, but the memory of them was fiercely sweet and more than worth the price, the risk of death.

Upon reaching the camp, I found the com-

mand ready to move. The war had begun in earnest, and during that afternoon there had been a skirmish between our band and Lou Biddle's independent company. So we fell back fifty miles to the southward, while into the territory which we were forced to abandon came the steadfast army of the North. I shall not write of the skirmishes in which I bore a part, for this is a personal and, I hope, a modest recital rather than the history of battles. I was a captain, it is true, but little better was I than a freebooter. With no higher authority than our own will, we impressed horses, and I am not sure that Pearson did not go so far as to extort money. This brought to me a determination to join the regular Confederate forces, and it was only the hope of getting Biddle's scalp that kept me from deserting our band.

In my company was an old fellow named Slayton. He had been reputed to be the possessor of vast wealth, and I wondered that he should suffer the privations of the rank and file of an adventurous gang when with the influence of money he might easily find a position in the army. I put the question to

him, and he told me that he, too, wanted a shot at Lou Biddle. "I was living not far from Old Blood," said he, "and one night not long ago Biddle came to my house, tied me flat upon the ground and built a fire at my feet to torture out of me the whereabouts of my money. What little money I possessed had been sent South, and I told him so; but he didn't believe me and would have burnt my feet off if you boys hadn't happened along. And now all I want is a chance at him."

We had dashed back into the enemy's country and for a day and a night were camped at Old Blood. Old Slayton said that he would improve the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with tender memories, as he put it, which he did during the day and the most of the night by sitting beside his brother's grave. I came upon him as I was wandering about among the graves of my people. "This is the only relation I have here," he said, pointing to a headstone, and, looking at it, I read, "James Slayton, born December 8, 1815; died of smallpox, October 2, 1861."

"He was the best man that ever lived," said the old fellow; "and if he had lived, I wouldn't

have gone into this squabble. He had lived in the North nearly all his life, and I had about made arrangements to go up there with him—the fact is he came after me, but he took smallpox coming through Louisville and died at my house."

When the moon came up, and while we were getting ready to decamp, the poor old man sang a hymn over his brother's grave, bowed three times as if going through with some sort of Masonic right, and turned sadly away. He had never married, on account of his miserly nature, the boys said; but it was evident that in his heart there was a love nobler than the love for earthly possessions and he had the merit of being game. Many times we were in dangerous quarters, but I never knew him to quail. I felt that he was inclined to be more honorable than our average trooper, and once I hinted that it would be well for him and me to give over the life of the guerrilla and to join Forrest, who was not far from us. For a time he said nothing, but he took my hand and was pressing it when Nick Bowles came along.

"We are just shaking hands on a proposi-

tion," he said to Nick, and I wondered if he were going to betray me; but when Nick inquired as to the nature of the proposition he said, "That we shall make it the object of our lives to catch Lou Biddle."

"Got a little interest in him myself," replied Nick. "The last time he came into my saloon, he threw a bottle at my head, and that's no way to make love to me."

Pearson had full confidence in me, and I was sorry to leave him, but I had some little honor left; and I had discharged the Griffin debt. It was a war of chicanery, of hatred fiercer than the hatred existing between mere enemies, and I often wondered what good was to come from Southern success. But that question often arose among the poverty-stricken fellows that were fighting for an aristocracy; and I heard an old man, one of the sharpest shooters of the war, declare that he was going to fight to the end, but that if the South succeeded he would turn his back upon it and live in a foreign country.

Occasionally we heard from the professor. He was in the cavalry with Wolford; was desperately dashing, and had hanged at least five

of Pearson's men. "But we'll pick him up one of these nights," said Pearson. "And I reckon you've got an old score to settle with him, Turk."

I had told him of the professor's sword flashing above my head, but had not told him the truth as to the cause. "Yes," I replied, "and when you catch him, I hope you'll be so obliging as to turn him over to me."

"All right, if you'll agree to give me your interest in Lou Biddle."

We struck a bargain. "Hope you'll give me one bite out of him," said Nick. "I ain't forgot the time he sailed that flat rock at me."

A few evenings after this, I had just returned from a wild dash into Scoville when Nick met me at the outer edge of the camp. "How does the old town look?" he asked with a touch of homesickness in his voice.

"Pretty red. They killed six of my men."

"Did they git old Slayton?"

"No, he's all right."

I was about to pass on, leading my horse, when Nick said, "I reckon you've come twenty-five miles in a hurry. And I want to

say you are the luckiest man in the world, and yo' luck on this here occasion don't lie in the fact that you got out of Scoville alive. There's somethin' waitin' for you that will make yo' heart dance a jig."

"What is it?"

"Can't you guess?" He came closer to me, and by the light of a fire I saw his old-time grin.

"Don't think I can. What is it?"

"They have cotched the professor."

"What, you don't tell me!"

"Well, I don't know who else does if I don't. Pearson's got him right over yonder by the fire."

I hastened to headquarters, and there was the professor, sitting on a log with his hands tied behind him. As I strode into the light, still leading my horse, the old man looked up and then without a word looked down again. It was evident to me that he wasn't going to beg for his life. Pearson came out of a shack built of rails. "Well," said he, "where's my man Biddle?"

"I could have killed him, but I knew you wanted him alive."

"You are right. I suppose you recognize this gentleman?"

"Think I've seen him before."

"Ah, hah! The boys brought him in this afternoon."

"Does he belong to me?"

"I am a man of my word."

"All right, Colonel. I did think of hanging him; but as he is rather a brave soldier, I think he merits shooting."

"You are improving in your language," said the professor.

"Yes, thanks to the books you so kindly permitted me to read. And now, Colonel, as I am not a man to put off a pleasure, I'll dispose of him at once. Will you take a walk with me, sir?"

The professor got up without a word and faced about. "This way," said I. They had "hobbled" him with a rope, and his steps were short. I told him to take his time. Nick came up and said that he had always been my friend. "And I think," said he, "you ought to let me go along and take a crack at him."

"Stay where you are," I commanded. "This is a private affair. I have something to say to

him that I don't want any one to hear. This way, professor."

"Major, sir," he said.

There was no path, but in the woods there was no underbrush. Not far off was a sink hole. "A better grave than you deserve," I remarked, telling him of a thorn tree that grew upon the brink. "I hope your people are well, Major. Does Mrs. Kirkpatrick live——"

"She lives in her own home, sir."

"Is her husband in the army?"

"A captain of artillery, sir."

"You find that rope about your legs inconvenient. Shall I take it off?"

"No. You would put me to the temptation of kicking you."

"You see how gentlemanly our fellows are," said I. "They are not following to spy upon your death."

"Again let me compliment you upon the improvement in your language. When we met the last time——"

"You gave me no opportunity to show my improvement," I broke in.

"Possibly not. You deserved nothing but death at my hands."

"Well, here we are," said I. "And now I have a few words to say to you. I am going to untie you and put you on my horse, and when you have ridden off a few hundred yards, I'm going to fire four or five shots into this sink hole and then throw in old stumps and leaves, to cover you up, you see. There is not power enough in all the Confederacy to make me kill you."

For a moment he stood as if stupefied, and then cried out, "Turk, God bless you."

"And God bless you—you and the rest of them at home. Now keep quiet." I untied him and helped him upon the horse. Leaning over he put his arm about my neck, and then without a word slowly rode away. I watched him for a time and then began to fire into the sink hole. A shout arose in the camp, and to the tune of "John Brown's Body," some one began to sing:

"There goes another Yank a-lookin' for his grave."

CHAPTER XXVI

ON THE LAKE SHORE

I HAD given my beautiful iron-gray horse to the professor, and returning to the camp I fashioned a lie in self-defense. My plan was to swear on the following morning that he had been stolen during the night, but a quite natural event relieved me of the necessity of telling a falsehood, for along toward midnight we were surprised by Federal cavalry and completely routed. Our pickets had been eluded or quietly butchered, and as resistance was useless, our men fled in every direction. I sprang upon the first horse that came to hand. A few of us rallied about daylight when it was learned that Pearson had been killed. By this time we were near the Tennessee line, and crossing over we soon came upon Forrest. I had no hope of retaining my captaincy under this hard-headed and exacting warrior, so Slayton and I joined the ranks. Nick Bowles had come along, and

soon drew attention to himself by mysteriously getting whisky and selling it to the soldiers. He was put in the guardhouse, and I heard Forrest say to him, "I catch you at that sort of thing again, and I'll hang you as high as Haman."

And now it was a constant fight, day after day. One night I heard that Nick had been taken up again, and the next morning he was court-martialed and found guilty of holding communication with the enemy. The proof was not to be waived aside, and, in fact, he had deserted when captured. Together with a corporal's squad, I was detailed to hang him. I was accustomed to blood and to death in all its varied forms, but this was a creepy assignment, and I would have begged off, did try it, in fact, but found it useless. We took the poor wretch to the handiest tree, stood him on a barrel and tied a rope about his neck. What sort of mocking fate was it that compelled me to tie the rope? We watched him until he had ceased to kick, and then rode on. Poor devil, he seemed to have been born for that especial purpose.

It was a long time before I saw my native

State again, and when I turned northward, it was in a detail from Forrest to go with Morgan upon his raid into Indiana. I haven't found out yet what object could have been served by that raid. A child could have seen that it was to be a losing game. We crossed the river as conquerors, we made many a gallant stand, and cut many a swirling dash; but the entire country was in arms against us. Finally the command was scattered, and then it was a running fight to get back over into Kentucky. One afternoon when tired out with flight, we were captured, ten of us; and then we learned that Morgan himself had been taken. So this was the end of our brilliant but foolhardy dash into the North.

On the lake shore, at Chicago, a prison camp had been named after the statesman Douglas. Thither we were taken, and found so many of our acquaintances there that our arrival was in the nature of a reunion. The discipline was exacting; to cross a line was sure death; but how quiet and peaceful was it all compared with the storms through which we had passed! For a time, a year at least, we drew better rations than had graced

our most sumptuous days in the field; though, in retaliation for Andersonville, we were made to feel that we were not guests of honor. For weeks at a time we were almost famished, and for trivial offenses the punishment was often inhuman. Not far from my quarters there had been put up a high board with a sharp edge. It was called Morgan's mule, and sometimes for a word, a mere look, our men were set astride upon it. Once a youngster complained that he couldn't ride without stirrups, and they tied bricks to his feet. But in a way I was delighted, for in my square a school was opened by men competent and anxious to teach. Books were supplied by sisters of charity. Slayton, old as he was, became a student of political economy. He did not expect ever to have any active use for the science, but the word "economy" appealed to his habits and his fancy. He and I bunked together. By some means he had smuggled in a twenty-five-cent silver piece, and the boys used to say that he would wear it out with counting it.

As I advanced well into my studies, so absorbing did they become that I often for-

got my hunger. The president of our university was a Harvard man, and he predicted that I would carry off the honors of my class.

One night the plan of a conspiracy to escape was made known to me. From the outside we were to receive help, and then across the prairies we were to gallop toward freedom. I did not approve the plan. The fact was that I did not desire my liberty. For the privilege of drinking at the fount of learning, I was willing to endure all sorts of bodily privations. The attempt was made, however, and failed. Several men were hanged, and we resumed our duties of submission and of hunger.

The sight of an Italian girl, walking through the prison with a priest, brought me to the notion of writing to Nan. I knew that not even the sparing of her father's life could have softened her into a forgiveness toward me, but I mused that in her scorn there might be a reminiscent pleasure; and so I wrote to her, not asking her to forget my brutality, but giving her an account of my life on the lake shore. When the letter had been read by the authorities and passed on into the postoffice,

I was seized with a fear that her scorn might be of the silent-contempt variety, and then I regretted having written. The days passed, and no word came from her. But when nearly two months had gone by, a letter came. Nervously I tore open the envelope, and sitting on the edge of my bunk, with the wind howling and the snow drifting outside, I read her words, over and over again. Had she waited to school herself into silence on the subject of my outrageous conduct? No hint did she drop that a memory of it dwelled in her mind.

"We thought that you must have been killed long ago," she said. "Colonel Lou Biddle, who was at our house some time last spring, said that he was almost certain you had been killed on the night when Pearson's guerrillas were cut to pieces. Running a great risk to save father was a noble act on your part, and although I know that in many ways you are unforgiving, yet I was not surprised. Mr. Bloodgood went into the Union army, as he said he would do for me, but after serving his first enlistment, refused to become a veteran by reënlisting unless I would agree to

marry him. Was I not sufficiently patriotic to do this? Do I not love my country? And there is so little a woman can do, you know. He was tall and, in his uniform, rather handsome, with much shining brass about him and with never a suggestion that his boots were pinching. I admit that all this was a temptation, but I didn't marry him. It was your old friend Champ Jones, I believe, who said that I was to make some man miserable. Was it because I respected this man too much to make him unhappy? We have not seen father for a long time, as he is in the South; but he writes regularly. Amy's captain has been discharged on account of a wound, but appears to be as well as ever. He says that as soon as the war is over he is going to establish a school. Of course you don't know that Amy has a boy. She has. He is more than a year old, and on his stick-horse has joined the cavalry. And so at last you have a chance to study. Try to believe that the war was brought about for that especial purpose. It might make you feel better. Mr. Hoover is the chaplain of a regiment quartered not far from Scoville. Last Sunday mamma and I

went to hear him preach. He has taken nearly all the little children out of torment, and has supplied their places with rebels and occasionally a rebel child. I suppose you know that Nick Bowles was hanged. Riddleberry Buck, while hauling salt from over in Tennessee, came upon him swinging from a limb, poor fellow, and cut him down and buried him. I asked Mr. Hoover what, in his opinion, had become of Nick's soul, and he said that, all things considered, it must be in a bad way. I don't know that you deserve so long a letter, but here it is. And I must ask you not to write again. I don't say this out of meanness, but because I can't help feeling that the war has made us enemies. No, I don't mean that. How could you be my enemy when you have proved my father's friend and rescuer? Still, I don't want to hear from you again until the war is over."

Never had she been so self-contained; but before reading halfway through the letter, I felt that I was not to write again. Yet somehow I could not get it out of my head that the professor's house was my home.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION

WE WERE permitted to study the past, the campaigns of Caesar, but were kept ignorant of the progress of the great war, except in so far as our information came through channels purified of all criticism. For the most part, the news of the day that reached us was in the nature of orations on the glory achieved by Union arms at the front. That there must be an occasional reverse, we could divine through atmospheric influences from the outside, a stillness that fell for days at a time. The continuous want of food may make one spiritual, and in the absence of beef there may be a psychic intuition. Freedom of speech was denied, but in whispers at night we spoke of the last heroic struggle of the South. But prospect was dead and there was no hope, save that the war might soon come to an end. Smallpox broke out in our square, in my room, my bunk. Old Slayton was stricken. Cases were so numerous that the sufferers were not isolated, but remained to take care of companions who, in their weakness, needed

attention. In his delirium Slayton moaned over the grave at Old Blood. One night, with his mind partly wandering, he said, "Strange that he should die of smallpox and that I should, too. But Lou Biddle couldn't get him." Day by day he grew worse, and I knew that he was soon to be taken out to the frozen field. One morning, when his mind was clear, he said to me, "When we are alone, there is something I want to say to you."

"We are alone now."

"Where is Charley Sharp?" he inquired, meaning one of our roommates.

"He has gone out."

"Did they take him out? Don't fear to tell me."

"Yes. He died last night."

"They will take me next."

"No, you may get well."

On his black pillow I saw his poor old head shaking. "It can't be. I know. And you have nursed me day and night, and you gave me all the blanket when it was cold. Do you know where my brother is buried?"

"Yes, at Old Blood."

"Has any one come in?"

"No, we are alone."

"Where is the guard?"

"On his beat at the far end of the line."

"Is he? Then I will tell you something, Turk. I never had a brother."

I thought that again his mind was wandering, but he raised himself up and gave me a strange look and a smile. "Listen to me. I never had a brother. It was a trick. That grave holds my gold, gold—in an iron box, the greed of a lifetime. After Biddle burnt my feet, I put it there; and as I told you, my sole aim in fighting was to kill him. It shall be yours, Turk. It will make you rich, this gold of my grandfather's and father's. Believe what I say. My mind is sound now, but before long it will wander again, and if I talk as if I were at the grave, make a noise so no one can understand. Ah, you said we were alone. There is a man over in that bunk."

"Yes, Sam Atterson, but he is dead. They are coming for him now."

He had one other lucid interval. He could not tell me how much gold was in the grave, but he said that it was more than a strong man could lift. "I came by it as honestly as a miser could," said he; "sold all my property just before the war and would have taken my gold away, but I neglected to move it, being afraid, till the storm broke, and then I had to make a quick shift. Ah, you will be a rich man," he said, looking at me with pride. "The poor bound boy won't be bound any more, and the wretches will grovel to him. Compared with me they were nearly all paupers. And many a time in the shine of that

"THAT GRAVE HOLDS MY GOLD"

gold I have sat hungry, because I was afraid to give up any of it lest it all might begin to take wings."

For a time I was skeptical, but he finally convinced me, and upon my knees I dropped, beside his bed, and holding his hand thanked him.

"You mustn't do that," he said, "for you are my gold as long as I live. I possess you, and you possess the gold, and in that way it is still mine, and I see it before me."

He took my fingers and played with them, counting them time and again as if he were telling gold pieces. Shortly after this his mind failed, and never again gave forth a gleam of light. He died while a March tempest was howling, and out to the frozen field they took him.

Another poor wretch came in to bunk with me, and in his cold and fitful sleep he constantly muttered of a cabin on the edge of the timber where the woodpeckers looked like red apples flying through the air, and the sun was ever warm in front of the door where he fancied that he was sitting on a bench. I thought that the smallpox would regard it as a huge joke to seize upon me and snatch me away from the gold in the grave, and sometimes in the night I could hear the disease, typified in the form of a gigantic Malay with rough skin and curved sword, coming across the square, and yelling in his delight; but it was only the

wind come to play with the tatters of dying men. Day after day I waited to be stricken down, but the epidemic passed, and I was well and enthusiastic over my books.

But not so much, let me confess, as I was before I had become heir to the treasures of old Slayton's grave. And it proved to me that I had not been a student so much for the sake of knowledge as for the spiteful hope that I might be lifted above the ignorant, who sought to spread over me their humiliating patronage. The old man who took Slayton's place was carried away to the field that now was thawing; and Barrett, the president of my university, came in to take his place. It was pleasant to lie there, listening to his talk. Learning is garrulous when treated with respect. One evening we knew that the war was done. "And I think," said Barrett, "that we shall be permitted to leave within a day or two. Whither are you going?"

"From here to Louisville, and then across the country to a place where I lived."

"Where you were a poor and ignorant boy, I suppose. Well, the war has ruined many a man, morally and intellectually, but it has been of great benefit to you. While you are not a scholar, you are in a fair way to become one if you should put your mind to it. But in the meantime what are you going to do for a living?"

"Work at something," I answered, keeping close the secret of my gold.

"But you will need a suit of clothes and a little money to provide for expenses home. In Louisville I shall be pretty well supplied, and I shall be pleased to lend you, say, two hundred dollars."

"I thank you, and I shall accept your offer, for I can easily pay back the amount."

"You may take your own time about it."

"No, that will not be necessary. I know of a box that contains——"

"Oh, you have been a miser, eh?"

"No, I haven't, but perhaps some one else has," and feeling that I had said enough and, indeed, regretting that I had said as much, I changed the subject to one of ancient philosophy; for I knew that in talking Plato he would soon forget everything else.

How like a hard and merciless winter did that old camp break up! But not even the most thoughtful of us halted to moralize upon it. The air outside was bleak with a spitting of April snow, but it was free; and after two years of degradation, we were permitted to roam about at will. Once, while walking half dreamily, I leaped back as I came to a streak of tar in the street, thinking of the dead line. I went with Barrett, and ah, the banquet-like meal at a hotel! Barrett's craving was for potatoes with brown gravy; while

eggs, soft-boiled and broken in a glass, sent me up to the Elysium of gastronomic bliss. But we were ragged, and the gamins of the streets, knowing that we were liberated rebel prisoners, followed us about with gibes and often with mud.

On the first night after our freedom, we took train for Louisville; and a negro insolently accosted us at the steps of a car and asked the numbers of our sleeper berths, and then he laughed and cried out that he guessed we were fortunate to be permitted to live. Barrett called out to me to stop, but I snatched a green flag out of a socket and with the staff cracked the negro over the head, not once but several times, and I saw his black wool fly in the air and rejoiced that his blood flowed upon the platform. The conductor came running up, and I thought that I should be taken off to prison, but instinctively he knew the cause of my assault, and he hustled us up to a coach near the engine and told us to keep quiet. Just before the train started, two policemen came aboard, looking about, and I heard the conductor say, "But we haven't time to wait. Why doesn't the darkey come and identify him?"

"He is too badly hurt," the policeman replied.

"But we haven't time to wait." And he

rang the bell. The policemen got off, and when the conductor came along I said to him, "It might come my way to help you one of these days."

"Ticket. I never saw you before, sir."

God bless him! God bless the man whom God inspires to lie for the unfortunate!

We arrived in Louisville about ten o'clock the next morning, and after going to a restaurant where there were more potatoes with brown gravy and more soft-boiled eggs broken in a glass, we got into a hack and were driven to a tobacco warehouse where an old gentleman seized Barrett about the neck and wept over him. I hung back, but the old gentleman grasped me warmly when Barrett, his son, introduced me; and it was not long before two hundred dollars had been placed in my hand. These happy men urged me to go home with them; but I thanked them, backing off during the time, and told them that I must hasten across the country. And now a fear that the grave might contain nothing but the bones of a man, came and took cold possession of me; and on the train whenever I dozed, I was sure to awake with a start of disappointment and of horror.

It was dark when I got off at a station near the inn wherein I had slept when taking Amy to school, and here I hired a carryall and a horse, and providing myself with a lantern,

shovel, pick, hammer, chisel, and a broad piece of carpet, set out for Old Blood. The night was dark and cloudy, and for this muffling I was thankful. The country had been somewhat changed by the war; fences were moved, and trees cut down, but the road was not to be mistaken, and not once did I miss the way. But as I drew near to the famous old school, the fear that with Slayton it had all been a delirium seized upon me and shook me like a chill, like the shivers that Nan had the night she came into the room to see her father thrust me out and to find herself outraged of her lips.

Down into a ravine, across a stream in which I had often waded, up a steep place, and I could hear the murmuring flow of the spring. I remembered well the location of the grave, to the left of the house, near the road; and I halted and lighted my lantern, to find that it was only a few feet away. I got down on my knees and read the name and the date of death, and it all was so truth-like that I shuddered and got up and stood there trembling. An owl hooted, and I jumped and thought of the parrot that had called me a liar in Nick's saloon. I recalled Slayton's words, one at a time, pondering and striving to bring back the expression of his face; and this gave me courage. The earth was gravelly and not hard to shovel; and with a

wild energy I worked until the box was reached beneath a layer of boards. But it looked by my dim light so much like a burial case that I leaped out of the grave and stood mopping my brow. I thought that I heard some one coming, and I put out the lantern, and long was it before I could light it again, for the oil seemed to be failing. At it again I went, and now the box looked smaller than a burial case. I scraped the earth from the rusting top, but could not get the lid open, so I shoveled a space at the side to give me more leeway. There was a staple and a padlock of brass; I attacked the staple with the hammer and chisel; off it flew, and I seized the lid and lifted it. And there was the gold glowing in the light; and I threw myself upon it, not in fear as poor old Slayton had so often done, but in a victorious delight.

Now came the work of getting the treasure into the wagon. He had told the truth—the box was more than I could lift; so I took as much of the gold as I could at a time in the broad shovel, and poured it into the wagon. And at last I got the box out and put it into the wagon, then I put back all the gold into the box and as best I could fastened down the lid and spread the carpet over it.

Then onward I slowly drove, wondering whither to go, what to do with my uncounted riches. It would not be wise to drive up to a

bank, even if there were one sound enough to trust. Then I thought of old Champ and his out-of-the-way place. Him I could trust, and to him I would go to bury my gold under his hearth and let it remain there until I could convey it safely to Louisville. This resolution cheered me, and I touched the old horse into a trot.

It was yet a long distance to Champ's, but by nine o'clock the next day I came out of the woods, within sight of the cabin. From the chimney there came no smoke; the old man was not in the yard, skinning a mink; the place looked deserted. I got out at the gate and started toward the cabin, but a low mound beside the path attracted my attention, and looking closer I read Champ's name on a pine head-board. I sat down on a stump, and long I mused there. But I did not alter my intention of burying the gold under his hearthstone, and I did so as quickly as possible. Then brushing off the soil that still was clinging to me, I drove toward the professor's house. Ah, how different everything looked, in a spiritual way! Over the fields I glanced with a sort of pride, knowing that I could buy them, and in the road I met an old man who had always been called rich. He did not recognize me, but I nodded to him and muttered, "Poor old pauper!" But further along there was a material change, a

big white house on a hill; and while slowly I was driving by, a man standing at a gate called out to me, and I recognized Captain Kirkpatrick. He rushed up, seized me by the hand, and urged me to go up to the big white house, his home.

"No, not now, I thank you. I am anxious to——"

"Yes, I understand. You will find her just the same."

"But a little more contained," I suggested.

"Oh, yes, for she teaches a school now, not far from where Hoover's church was burned down. And by the way, he has re-built and is holding forth every Sunday. And I am going to open a school pretty soon—am going to give Nan a position, and if you so desire, you may finish your education with me."

I thanked him, just as much as I should have done years ago, and then added, "But the fact is, I am well prepared and may go through Harvard."

"You don't tell me. Let me congratulate you."

We shook hands again, and he told me that I not only looked learned, but prosperous. Ah, old gold, you shine through, don't you? They call you a thief, and can prove it; they say you are a murderer, and you are; but they know that you are a glory, and they worship you.

After a few more words, inquiries concerning the welfare of Mrs. Kirkpatrick and the boy, I was about to drive on, when the captain said, "I suppose you stopped back yonder to look at your land."

"Look at my land! I didn't know I owned any land."

'Didn't you? Is it possible that you were unaware of the fact that Champ Jones made you his heir?"

"I didn't know he was dead until just now when I saw his grave."

"Indeed! He died about eight months ago, and just before that event made his will in your favor, leaving to you the cabin and a few acres of land, all he possessed."

On my own premises had I buried my gold!

From the captain's house to the professor's was but a short drive, nor did I seek to make it shorter by touching up the horse. My mind was full of the past, and sweetly was I dreaming of the hard days of my bondage. Over there was the field wherein I was plowing when Nick Bowles first came into view, and farther away, marked by tall trees, was the place where Mose and Tab had whipped me almost to death.

Neither the professor's house nor the immediate surroundings had undergone any marked alteration. There was the swing hanging from the great tree in the yard, the carpenter

"HE SEIZED HOLD OF ME"

shop, the althæa bushes, the corner whence I had rushed forth to fire the derringers; ah, and there was the soldier himself, walking up and down, dressed in uniform, but with no sword to cleave the air above my head. He halted and raised his eyes as my wagon rattled up to the gate, but not recognizing me, turned to resume his walk. Then I hailed him.

"Eh?" he said, "eh?" coming forward, straining his eyes, for they were not so good as they had been. "Eh, well, well, as I am alive!" I jumped out, and he seized hold of me, shook me, and called loudly over his shoulder, "Louise, come out here. I've captured the worst rebel in all the land."

Mrs. Emory came running out, wiping her eyes even before she got to me, and she put her arms about my neck, and the professor called out, "That's right, give it to him," and then, wiping his own eyes, he said, "I am going to plant tobacco over yonder. But what is the use of standing here?"

We went into the house and sat down by the fire. They told me that Nan had not come from her school, and I thought of offering to go with my wagon to fetch her, but, still afraid, though gold had made me strong, I refrained. We ate dinner as of old, discussing everything but the war; and afterward, biding the time when Nan should return, I

walked about the place. There on the smokehouse door were the faded marks, the calls for my circulating library, and fondly and yet rather sadly I made another mark.

It was almost dark when Nan came home. Her mother was in the yard, and I heard her say, "Oh, you can't guess who's come," and the witch replied:

"Yes, I can. Nobody but Turk."

She shook hands with me, complimented me on my appearance, saying that she hadn't supposed that clothes could help me so much, and, mischievously looking at my thin boots, she asked me if I had exchanged with Adjutant Bloodgood. Ah, and how riotously beautiful she was! and so compelling that I thought to tell her of my gold—her gold if she desired it; but then something, a common sense which I had never before possessed, whispered to me to wait, to find out how much she thought of me for myself alone.

It was a happy evening, there by the cheerful fire; and when bedtime came, Mrs. Emory said that I was to be shown to the guest's chamber, but Nan objected. "No," she begged, "let him sleep in his old place to-night." I decided with her, and Mrs. Emory slowly yielded.

When I had bade them all good-night, the professor and his wife going a little time before I took leave of Nan, I went up to my

old garret—and there on my box was a book and a candle, and on the book lay a piece of paper on which was written, "God bless you." I turned to go back down the stairs, but I had to feel my way, so dim was everything, and there was Nan, sitting by the dying fire with her hands over her face. I touched her hair, but she didn't look up, but shivered and said nothing. "And all these years you have been putting those books there, and I thought it was Amy." She looked up, and my arms were about her, and her lips were warm against mine. "And all my life I have loved you," she said, there by the dying fire.

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